

SPECIAL TV ISSUE • SIXTEEN COLOR PAGES

Rod Serling's
THE **TWILIGHT ZONE** Magazine

DECEMBER 1985 \$2.95

K48386

NEW ON
CBS

THE

T W I L I G H T



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS

**STEPHEN
KING**

**HARLAN
ELLISON**

**PHIL
DE GUERE**



Display until Nov 25

CHEYENNE
WY 82007
1113 KING CT
ALBERT RICE
82007RCE1111KN00R ZONE
APR 1986
039 01R
DHL

TZ episode "The Star"

THE **Rod Serling's** TWILIGHT ZONE Magazine

December 1985

FICTION

<i>Anne Rice</i>	18	The Vampire Lestat
<i>A. M. Ronning</i>	28	Fade to Black
<i>Jon Cohen</i>	32	I Don't Know Why She Swallowed the Fly
<i>Randall Silvis</i>	36	Why the Stranger Dreams
<i>Harlan Ellison</i>	42	Paladin of the Lost Hour
<i>Annette Hard</i>	68	Dwindling
<i>Charles L. Grant</i>	76	Give Us a Big Smile

FEATURES

	6	In the Twilight Zone
<i>James Verniere</i>	80	Movie Preview: 'The Doctor and the Devils'
<i>J. Michael Straczynski and Kathryn M. Drennan</i>	82	Show-by-Show Guide to 'Night Gallery': Part Five
<i>Rod Serling</i>	90	TZ Classic Teleplay: 'A Thing About Machines'

SPECIAL CBS TZ PREVIEW

<i>Peter Rondinone</i>	4A	Starbursts
<i>Ben Herndon</i>	6A	Adventures in the Scream Trade
<i>Ben Herndon</i>	10A	Real Tube Terror
<i>Ben Herndon</i>	12A	Ellison's Rules
<i>Carol Serling</i>	13A	Talking Twilight Zone

OTHER DIMENSIONS

<i>Doc Kennedy</i>	8	Books
<i>Peter Rondinone</i>	12	Illuminations
<i>Robert Edelstein</i>	14	TZ Tech
	16	Letters
<i>Welch Everman</i>	103	TZ Video
<i>Gahan Wilson</i>	106	Screen
	111	Classified
<i>F. Paul Wilson</i>	112	TZ Terror
	114	Dataline

* Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone Magazine*, (Issn # 0279-6090) December 1985, Volume 5, Number 5, is published bimonthly (6 times per year) in the United States and simultaneously in Canada by TZ Publications, a division of Montcalm Publishing Corporation, 800 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. Telephone (212) 986-9600. Copyright © 1985 by TZ Publications. Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone Magazine* is published pursuant to a license from Carolyn Serling and Viacom Enterprises, a division of Viacom International, Inc. All rights reserved. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Return postage must accompany all unsolicited material. The publisher assumes no responsibility for care and return of unsolicited materials. All rights reserved on material accepted for publication unless otherwise specified. All letters sent to Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone Magazine* or to its editors are assumed intended for publication. Nothing may be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission from the publishers. Any similarity between persons appearing in fiction and real persons living or dead is coincidental. Single copies \$2.50 in U.S., U.S. military bases, and U.S. possessions, \$3.00 elsewhere (excepting the December issue, which is \$2.95 in the U.S. and \$3.50 elsewhere). Subscriptions: U.S., U.S. military, and U.S. possessions, \$15.00; \$18.50 elsewhere. All orders must be paid in U.S. currency. ABC membership applied for and pending. Postmaster: Send address changes to Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone Magazine*, P.O. Box 252, Mt. Morris, IL 61054-0252. Printed in U.S.A.

TZ IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE

HYPE WARP

As I write, all the machinery of hype is in abeyance. Superlatives are stacked in agency storerooms; commercials are in custody on cassettes. Yet you have probably witnessed these mysteries already. Because of the archaic time lag of publishing, I can only report from the deep past, six weeks ago, when the new *Twilight Zone* series was the subject of intense speculation, but not yet quite real.

Trapped here in July, I must base my judgments on a single episode, "Word Play," which I saw at a screening. It was rather modest on the surface, the story of a man cut off from society by that least threatening of monsters, language. No exploding craniums. No rubber aliens designed to tug at the heartstrings. Will the American public find terror in a mutant adjective, a public injured to George Romero's operas of the dead, or Toby Hooper's bursting vampires from outer space? (Favorite line: When one of Hooper's blood-suckers splatters out of a helicopter, a principal remarks: "She's gone now. She's all over London.")

My guess is audiences will respond favorably to fresh ideas—and understatement. Gore has long been played for laughs. Fear has to find other symbols to rouse us from our tube-induced stupor. But I dwell back here, in July's darkness. I invite your comments on the new show. We'll continue to cover it—along with the entire fantasy field.

Several years ago, in an interview with Tom Sticar, Harlan Ellison defined the symptoms a serious author can expect if he contracts the dread disease, teleplay writing. After developing a treatment for *Logan's Run*, Ellison explained that he "sat down to write the screenplay and got violently ill. I started to lose my lunch, my head ached, I started to black out..."

In our special color section on the making of the new *Twilight Zone* series, Ellison explains what drew him back to the teleplay form. His "Shatterday" and "Paladin of the Lost Hour" will both be presented this fall, and we're happy to say that "Paladin" also graces these pages. Interestingly enough, Ellison began "Paladin" as a short story, took time out to complete the tele-



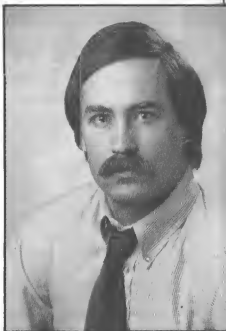
A.M. Ronning

play, then finished it in prose form. I can't tell you how closely the two versions correspond, except to say that Ellison is playing masterfully in each with the fate of the world.

Translating prose into the language of scripts is the subject of our interview with Stephen King, who talks about his movies, and the making of his short story "Gamma" into a TZ episode. (Scripted, naturally, by Harlan Ellison.) And for insight into the creation of the new series, see Carol Serling's interview with producer Phil DeGuere, who puts the relationship between the original TZ and its current offspring into perspective.

"I Don't Know Why She Swallowed the Fly" is Jon Cohen's meditation on parental appetite. Cohen, a former winner of the TZ short story contest, specializes in these concise and clever tales, a difficult feat judging by the sheer bulk of every manuscript that waddles through the door here.

Annette Hard's "Dwindling" probes the psychological terrors of a landscape she evidently knows well, the suburbs. Personally, I always feared getting lost in Daly City, outside of San Francisco, but Hard's setting is far more undifferen-



Randall Silvis

tiated—and disorienting. Hard, who describes herself as "an imperfect homemaker who lives in a small town just one traffic jam away from Houston," is the book critic for the *Houston Chronicle* and author of *Stranger at the Crossroads*, a chronicle of voodoo—where else?—in the suburbs.

To the question, Is there sex in the *Twilight Zone*?, Randall Silvis gives the definitive answer. Yes, in telepathic dreams. If monstrous mushrooms are involved. Or very small women.

Silvis won the Drue Heinz Prize for his collection of short fiction, *The Luckiest Man in the World*, which was published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in 1984. Bard/Avon will bring out the paperback in 1986. Randall, a very busy guy, has finished a second collection of stories, *Cuckold and Friends*, and is now completing a novel, *Mysticus*. He has also had six plays produced in regional theatres—award winners, of course.

Charles L. Grant, veteran horror writer and editor of such anthologies as *Shadows*, *Nightmares*, and *Horror*, offers us "Give Us a Big Smile," a look at the down side of American hunger. In "Smile," a



Charles L. Grant

beleaguered father without a dime in his pocket does his best to cheer up his kids, who long for every shiny thing. He tries a joke here, a jaunty crack there. He does his best to grin. "Smile" is Grant's ultimate word on both Christmas shopping—and those leering yellow buttons with the upturned lips.

We now return to the adventures of Anne Rice's *The Vampire Lestat*, which we first excerpted in our October issue. There we found Lestat organizing a cosmic rock band, and discovering that his secrets have been revealed in a recent best-seller. (Rice's *Interview with a Vampire*, of course.) To set the record straight, Lestat decides to tell his life story.

In this issue, we find the seductive Lestat an outcast, cut off from his beloved thespians because he has become a vampire. The lure of human contact, and human blood, draws him back to the torch-lit theatre, however, with bizarre results. (The novel is due out this fall from Knopf.)

Sex and television, usually antithetical, keep cropping up in this column. A.M. Ronning, in "Fade to Black," offers a novel theory regarding tv: It can bestow eternal life.

According to Ronning, though, you need a cabinet-style television, a particularly battered one ...

Ronning, a Maine television director, admits to a trio of addictions: skiing, sailing, and writing. Her first attempts at the latter, in junior high, "were grizzly imitations of Hitchcock ... read aloud in the lunchroom."

She also confesses to an unpublished, five-hundred-page "romance, rock and roll" novel. "Fade to Black" is her first fiction to go into print.

Finally, I'd like to welcome F. Paul Wilson to these pages. Wilson delivered some wry remarks at our recent *Twilight Zone* Awards, which he has now committed to the page in the feature "TZ Terror." The author of *The Keep* and the Prometheus Award-winning *Wheels Within Wheels*, he gives the grasping fifties disc jockey his just reward in "The Last One Mo Once Golden Oldies Revival." Look for it in the next TZ.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations, once again, to the winners of the first TZ Dimension Awards, chosen by you, the readers.

Best Movie
(tie)

Indiana Jones
and *the Temple of Doom*
Ghostbusters

Best Book

Stephen King and Peter Straub
The Talisman

Best Story Published in
Twilight Zone Magazine
(tie)

David J. Schow
"Coming Soon to a Theater Near You"

Robert Bloch
"Pumpkin"

Best Artwork Published in
Twilight Zone Magazine

For "The Rocking Horse"
by Joe Burleson

Rod Serling's THE TWILIGHT ZONE Magazine

S. Edward Orenstein
Chairman and Executive Publisher
Milton J. Cuevas
President and Publisher
Sidney Z. Gellman
Treasurer

Associate Publisher and
Consulting Editor: Carol Serling
Executive Editor: John R. Bensink

Editor in Chief: Michael Blaine
Associate Editor: Alan Rodgers
Managing Editor: Robin Bromley
Contributing Editors: Gahan Wilson,
James Verniere, Doc Kennedy

Design Director: Michael Monte
Art Director: Paul J. Maringelli
Art Production: B. Lynne Foster,
Tom Waters

Typography: Irma Landazuri

Production Director: Stephen J. Fallon

Controller: Chris Grossman
Accounting Assistants: Asnar Angeles,
Saul Steinhilber

Assistant to the Publisher:

Margaret Inzana
Office Assistants: Dolores Fiore,
Veronica Linden

Traffic: Allan Gewat, Steven Moore

Newsstand Sales Director:

Michael Dillon
Subscription Manager:
Annmarie Pistilli

Circulation Managers:

Brian Orenstein, *Eastern*
Bruce Antonangeli, *Midwestern*
Harold Bridge III, *Southern*
Sam Frode-Hansen, *Western*
Direct Sales Manager: Judy Linden

Promotion Coordinator:

Laura LoMedico
Circulation Assistant: Nancy Wolz

National Advertising Sales Director:

Jeff Grinspan
Coordinator/Direct-Mail Manager:

Marina Despotakis
Advertising Sales Manager:
Sharon Kenney

Advertising Asst: Karen Martorano
West Coast Rep.:

JE Publishers' Representative Company
6855 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 2200,
Los Angeles, CA 90038
Tel: (212) 467-2266

Jay Eisenberg, Director of Advertising
Dallas: (214) 660-2253

Denver: (303) 595-4331

San Francisco: (415) 864-3252

The Hard, The Soft, and the Cyberpunk

This business of "hard" vs. "soft" science fiction has turned up a lot recently, notably in the year's four "Best of" collections. (Four! The whole of the mainstream has only two!) The newest of them, *The Science Fiction Yearbook* ("The Book that Defines State-of-the-Art in Science Fiction"), edited by Jerry Pournelle, with Jim Baen and John F. Carr (Baen, \$15.95), is forthrightly offered in reaction to the pervasive lily-liveredness that has softened the field.

In it Gregory Benford defines and defends the anthology's stance in his keynote essay, "Hard Science Fiction in the Real World." Benford goes out on several limbs here, beyond the usual defense of bad prose, to rule on how that prose ought to conduct itself: 1. Cool Analytical Tone; 2. Cosmic Mysticism; 3. The Wise-Guy Insider. Said style attracts "the convergent Personality," who seeks "a rational or 'technological' fix for the human condition."

His political scale is riveting, pointing writers not only from Left to Right, but also vertically, from Statist to anti-Statist. The hard guys he cites, Jerry Pournelle, Robert Heinlein, Poul Anderson, Larry Niven, Hal Clement, Harry Stine, James Hogan, Spider Robinson, Charles Sheffield, and Dean Ing (and Benford himself, one may infer), are in the Rightist anti-Statist quadrant. The page proofs I saw did not include a diagram, but I hope the finished book does. It would be a useful reference when an issue such as the President's Star Wars controversy sparks sharp debates in the field.

Benford's analysis strikes me as contradictory at several points, however, and can get tenuous, as when he attempts to rationalize (and forgive) Heinlein and Niven's ventures into fantasy.

I wonder how Benford reacts, or will react, to the new generation of techies that Gardner Dozois, in his introduction to *The Year's Best Science Fiction* (Bluejay, \$10.95) dubs the "cyberpunks," naming Bruce Sterling, William Gibson, Lewis Shiner, Pat Cadigan, and Greg Bear. Leftist anti-Statist, I'd venture, though they're perhaps too new to categorize. Still, I detect an aversion to moral strictures and, at least in a few cases, an interest in literary values that some of their elders would find suspect.

There isn't a better way of touching base with what's going on than reading through these "Best of's." In addition to Pournelle and Dozois (as I will call the collections), this year brings Terry Carr's *Best Science Fiction of the Year* (Tor, \$3.50) and *The 1985 Annual World's Best SF*, presented by Donald A. Wollheim (DAW, \$2.95).

Here are the repeats: John Varley's "Press Enter" and Octavia Butler's "Bloodchild" (both Nebula Prize-winners) made every collection but Pournelle. The prolific Tanith Lee made three out of four (again excepting Pournelle) with three different stories. Connie Willis's "Blued Moon," Michael Swanwick's "Trojan Horse," and Kim Stanley Robinson's "The Lucky Strike" are in both Dozois and Carr. (Willis also made Wollheim with "Cash Crop," which I liked better.) Lucius Shepard's "Salvador" made both Dozois and Wollheim. George Alec Effinger's funny "The Aliens Who Knew, I Mean, Everything" made Wollheim and Carr.

Of its eleven stories, Pournelle shares William Gibson's "New Rose Hotel" with Dozois and John Dalmass's "The Picture Man" with Wollheim, but otherwise goes its own way.

If four books and forty-eight stories seem like too much of a good thing, which anthology should you choose?

I'd have to go with Dozois, though you could pick up both Wollheim and Carr for less money and, given their divergence, have nearly as many stories to read. But Dozois's book has a distinctive editorial personality. He wants his readers to keep up with the times and includes some stories for educational purposes. His introduction and overview of the year's activities is instructive as well, and consequently more interesting than Charlie Brown's in Carr, or Algis Budrys's and Michael Glyer's in Pournelle.

The weakness of Pournelle is, oddly enough, in its stories. I detect no real point of view in the mix, and the stories seem, ironically, less "hard" than those in the other volumes. It also lacks "Bloodchild," the one story destined to become a classic—one of those tales which will be chilling new readers decades from now.

New writers, "cyberpunks" and

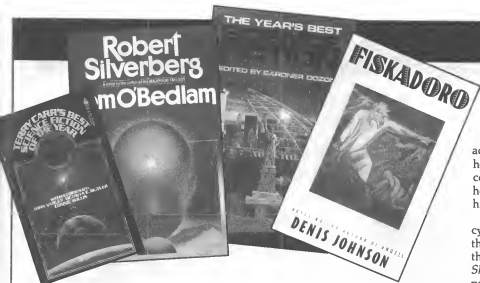
others, are producing novels, too. Bruce Sterling has for some time been publishing stories about the "Mechanist/Shaper" future in which we have transformed ourselves into "post-humans," either through genetic manipulation (Shapers), or by replacing vulnerable flesh with cybernetic devices (Mechanists), or both. But *Schismatrix* is his first novel set in the Shaper/Mech world (Arbor House, \$15.95). The hero is Abelard Lindsay, a Shaper diplomat run afoul of his political faction and exiled to an "ideologically decriminalized" area, a vile-smelling circumlunar artificial asteroid that has evolved into the crudest of criminal undergrounds.

Despite his aristocratic upbringing, Lindsay fits remarkably well into his milieu. While this is not exactly a new concept in science fiction adventure, Sterling manages to make the first (and by far the best) half of his novel fresh and amusing with his attention to detail. Lovingly, he describes the reek of the enclosed areas, their filth, their fungoids, their remarkable cockroaches (some are daintily multi-colored things, no doubt Shaped themselves, and housebroken, no less.)

I like, too, Sterling's fidelity to what seems to me to be a perfectly credible future reality. He sticks to our own solar system, respects the speed of light, and posits a kind of Samurai-West code with Russian undertones that seems plausible.

Unfortunately in the last half of the book, Sterling lets Lindsay grow old, rejuvenates him, and sends him off on a second round of inferior adventures, and the lively forward thrust of the story is lost, especially when Sterling starts muddling around with cosmic mysticism in the form of "Presences." I think I'm going to start calling this trap that sf writers tumble into "Benford's Pitfall"—or maybe "Benford's Black Hole" would be more appropriate to the genre.

Cyberpunk Greg Bear's *Eon* (Bluejay, \$16.95) reads like a multilayered tribute to Arthur C. Clarke. Most of the story takes place inside a huge hollowed-out asteroid, apparently deserted by its makers—that's *Rendezvous with Rama*. There is a time/space tumble into another continuum—that's 2001. There's a lot of interac-



tion between Americans and Russians, and an attempt to explain large mysteries prosaically—that's 2010. And there's Bear's prose and characterization, too—pretty basic, like Clarke's, just tools to get the job done.

The time is the near future. The asteroid appears; NASA/NATO get there first, but the Russians are close behind. The set-up is military and highly classified, for excellent reasons—this asteroid appears to have arrived from our own future or a parallel one, and the history books in its library

chronicle nuclear catastrophe for the Earth. Are they accurate? What can be done?

That alone is a lot of plot, but Bear throws in more. There are aliens. There is a huge cast, and lots of plot. And, too, there is cosmic mysticism, here called the "Way," and no more successful than Sterling's in *Schismatrix* or Robinson's in *The Memory of Whiteness* (see below).

But there's enough else going on so that Benford's Pitfall can be skipped over fairly easily.

Don't, by the way, mistake me as accusing Bear of ripping off Clarke; he's very much his own man, but the comparison is useful—this is the ore he's mining, and it probably indicates his future cast as a writer.

Kim Stanley Robinson is not a cyberpunk, but he's prominent among the new writers being handicapped as they settle into the track. *The Wild Shore*, his first book, a California post-nuclear coming-of-age novel (like *Fiskadoro*, below) was warmly received. *The Memory of Whiteness* (Tor, \$15.95) has a bigger scope, is not so carefully or tightly written, but is sure to expand Robinson's reputation. The influence, obvious, I think, is Jack Vance.... I like the idea of a younger writer being influenced by Vance.

Johannes Wright is more than a one-man band; he is the Master and solo player of the entire Holywelkin Orchestra, an amazing super toy, not a bit like a synthesizer, but instead a construct of all the traditional or-

"The avenging genius of popular culture"* at his scarifying best!

STEPHEN KING



**NATIONAL
BESTSELLER!**

SKELETON CREW

***Los Angeles Times Book Review**
\$18.95, now at your bookstore

G.P. PUTNAM'S SONS
A Member of The Putnam Publishing Group

chestral instruments melded into one large portable unit on tour through our solar system, which has been made habitable by "whitesuns," a concept easier to accept than explain. Wright is a peppy fellow—in the movie in my mind played by Tom Hulce of *Amadeus*—but he is serious too, not only as a musician, but as a student of Holywelkin, a future physicist who has evolved the unified field theory in a mysterious way.

Once again, the cosmically mystical parts of the novel are the weakest. Still, Robinson's playful—nay, downright winsome—tone and intelligence keep the novel moving past Benford's Pitfall.

Periodically, science fiction writers rear up on their hind legs and denounce the mainstream for violating their territory: the Way, the Truth, and the Life of Literature.

Recently, Norman Spinrad lathered up in the pages of a genre magazine over this tired argument, attacking Russell Hoban's novel, *Riddley Walker*, for being well-reviewed in mainstream publications that didn't understand that *A Canticle for Leibowitz* first used a post-nuclear setting and that neither tea nor hashish can be grown in England's climate.

Can we talk? Can I tell you how infantile I think this argument is? It bespeaks a tin ear for language, an insensitivity to original metaphor, prose texture, and even "cosmic mysticism," which Hoban negotiates neatly, not least because he doesn't try to be "cosmic."

All this leads up to a look at *Fiskadoro* (Knopf, \$14.95), by Denis Johnson, whose first novel was a mainstream prizewinner. *Fiskadoro* is also a post-nuclear coming-of-age novel, this time set in Key West, a perfect location for a necessarily insular book. The usual mentor figure is Mr. Cheung, manager of the pathetic remnants of the Miami Symphony Orchestra. There is also Cheung's grandmother, impossibly old enough to remember the fall of Saigon in 1974. And there is the usual demoralized society attempting to function.

I'm not going to come out and say that *Fiskadoro* proves that the mainstream can beat the genre at its own game. As a matter of fact, I don't think it will appeal to many genre readers as its plot is too slow and

indirect. But Johnson does two things very well here. First, he creates the texture of life in this ragged outpost beautifully and far more believably than I have ever seen done in a genre novel.

Second, he does a very good job sidestepping Benford's Pitfall by directing his mystical theme not outward toward the cosmos but inward in harmony with what the rest of the book is trying to do. Here, young Fiskadoro, abducted by a neo-Rastafarian/Voodoo cult, is ritually mutilated and changed in some not quite specified way that really *does* induce in the reader the "sense of wonder" that all this is supposed to be about.

Enough of the younger generation. Robert Silverberg has just published his most interesting novel in years, *Tom O'Bedlam* (Donald I. Fine, \$16.95). And it takes as its theme none other than—can you guess? Yep. Cosmic mysticism. However, like any old pro, Silverberg glides around and through Benford's Pitfall with considerable adroitness.

Vivid visions of unearthly places under strange suns begin appearing in dreams to inmates of a future mental institution where deeply troubled people go, usually voluntarily, to have crippling memories "picked" from their brains. In monitoring these dreams, the staff finds an exact correlation among them—and then staff members begin to dream, too.

Meanwhile, advancing from the south is the messianic *tumbonde* cult, headed by Senhor Papamacer, which teaches that salvation will come with the arrival of "Chungira-He-Will-Come" and "Maguali-ga," gods from deepest space. The ecstatic Latino-African procession is moving northward, followed by the at first skeptical then deeply believing anthropologist, Jaspin.

The unlikely key figure in these curious and disturbing affairs is Tom, the "holy fool," not quite mad but subject all his life to hallucinations, which, it seems, are beginning to transmit themselves to the general populace. But there are several serious questions. Do these images come from Tom's own mind? Or is he receiving messages from real planets and personages in space? If the latter is true, is the promised salvation real, or is it a cruel cosmic scam? When Tom

promises people that he can send them to the planet of their choice, leaving only their mortal coil behind, is he conning himself? Or them? Is he a murderer or a savior?

The book isn't perfect; it's a little on the thin side, finally, and Silverberg abandons it with too many unanswered questions. I'd argue, too, that Tom is too pat a figure, too self-consciously literary in pedigree (Shakespeare, Yeats, et cetera). But there's no doubting the power of the images evoked or their seductive effect. The religious feeling that affects a number of characters is especially believable and touching—so is their fear. And the *tumbonde* cult is very well done—I could have used more of that. It's good to see Silverberg getting back to this kind of writing in his longer work. I only wish this had been a bigger novel, with the kind of fine finish that his short stories usually have.

This month's column has given short shrift to horror so far, but you should know that Ramsey Campbell has a new collection that will not disappoint his readers, *Cold Print* (Scream Press, \$15.00), illustrated by J.K. Potter. Campbell's introduction pays tribute to Lovecraft, and so do several of the tales, with appropriately creepy titles such as "The Rending of the Veil" and "The Paces at Pine Dunes." I assume that every regular TZ reader is acquainted with Campbell's work, but if Scream books are hard for you to find, write P.O. Box 8531, Santa Cruz, CA 95061.

And finally, readers of this magazine will not want to miss *Dark Gods*, a collection of four novellas by T.E.D. Klein (Viking, \$16.95). Ted was the editor of TZ for five years, leaving to become a full-time writer after the success of his novel, *The Ceremonies*. For some reason, probably having to do with the gentlemanliness, so-called, of publishing, a magazine is not supposed to comment on the efforts of friends and contributors. That's a relief when the work is of less than top quality, but in this case I simply want to say that Ted's "Children of the Kingdom," which I read in the *Dark Forces* anthology several years ago, and which is included in this book, is the best, scariest, modern horror story I have ever read. And there's a lot more here of comparable value. Do read this book. ■

BLOOD DEFICIENCY

Vampires and werewolves have long been the stuff of folk tales and superstitions. But now Dr. David Dolphin, a professor of chemistry at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, has established that such creatures do exist. They are not monsters, however. Rather, he claims, they are simple people—victims of a rare genetic disease called porphyria.

The disease, according to Dr. Dolphin, makes the person's skin so sensitive to sunlight that any exposure results in grotesque disfigurements. For example, Dr. Dolphin explains that "the sun can make the victim's lips and gums taut, so the teeth, which would otherwise be normal, seem to stick out in an animal-like manner; and naturally, since a person's only defense against the sun is to go out only at night, you can see how this gave rise to the vampire folklore."

Moreover, Dr. Dolphin adds, nature instinctively tries to protect the victim's skin from the sun by covering it with an abnormal amount of hair. "That," he says, "is the werewolf part."

The disease is caused by a genetic disorder which makes an enzyme system in the body produce too much porphyrin—an ingredient of heme, the red pigment in blood. That is, says Dr. Dolphin, "when an individual gets too much of this porphyrin, the body can't excrete it, so it

stores it in the skin. And that is what makes the person photosensitive. Porphyrin absorbs the energy of the sun, and it becomes toxic, destroying skin cells."

In fact, Dr. Dolphin adds, "This condition sometimes results in severe mutilations of the skin and subfeatures. A person's nose and fingers can fall off."

An accepted clinical treatment for the disease is to give the victim an injection of pure heme, not a blood transfusion. "The heme," he says, "sends a message to the enzyme system telling it to switch off the production of porphyrin."

"Now going back to vampires," Dr. Dolphin adds, "I speculate that in the Middle Ages if a person couldn't get a shot of heme, which he couldn't, he might drink blood and

some of the heme in that blood might get into his system through the stomach and alleviate the pain. But," he notes, "I think *any* blood would have done, even if it came from cattle, even though the folklore says the vampires drank human blood."

Equally important, Dr. Dolphin does stress that those who do suffer from this form of the disease (one in 200,000) have enough problems without people suggesting they are monsters. "It's a very rare disease," he emphasizes, "which can be treated." Still, Dr. Dolphin reports, when he gave a talk at the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Los Angeles, one balding scientist did wonder out loud if this disease might hold some solution to his own hair growth problem.



MULTIPLE PERSONALITY

One day you wake up as Henry, a smooth talker, seducing women for money. The next day, you're Debra, a ten year-old girl, running away from home. But throughout it all, you are really Jeff, a thirty year-old filmmaker who suffers from multiple personalities.

And while cases like Jeff's are no longer new to an American public that has grown up on movies like *The Three Faces of Eve*, one researcher, Dr. Bennett Braun, of the Rush-Presbyterian St. Luke's Medical Center in Chicago, has made a startling discovery.

According to the *New York Times*, Dr. Braun has found evidence that "multiples" not only change their identities, but they may also change their physiology. Dr. Braun, for example, reports a case of a woman who was allergic to citrus fruit in some of her personalities, but not in all. Even more dramatic, Dr. Braun found



a diabetic woman who, the *Times* reports, "baffled her physicians by showing no signs of the symptoms of the disorder at times when one personality, which was not a diabetic, was dominant."

To lend credence to his discovery, Dr. Braun also researched the brainwave patterns of multiples and he reportedly found "promising" evidence that the brainwaves of different personalities have different patterns.

Nonetheless, Dr. Martin Orne, of the Institute of Pennsylvania Hospital, isn't convinced that "alternative explanations have been excluded to explain what happens to be a change in brain functioning of different personalities."

For example, he explains, "If we are at a party, and we're in the spirit, we're different than if say we're at work or at church. Now," he adds, "if we study an individual's brain activity while he is at the party, we might see many subtle changes in his brain activity without that individual having a multiple personality."

Dr. Orne feels there is still too little systematic research to determine whether a multiple personality has a "multiple body chemistry."

In regard to Dr. Braun's report of a diabetic woman who becomes nondiabetic when her personality shifts, Dr. Orne says, "Please be careful. If you ask a specialist in diabetes about this, he will tell you that blood sugar levels fluctuate, often for obscure reasons. One would, at the very

least, try to show a difference in glucose tolerance tests to suggest there may be a different physiology for different personalities."

And so, he stresses, "Until such evidence is available, healthy skepticism may be desirable."

MYSTERY MUSHROOM

April 9, 1984. Two hundred miles east of Japan. Shortly before midnight, the commander of Japan Airlines Flight 36 orders his crew to put on oxygen masks. From his cockpit, he sees a mushroom cloud. Its bulb is soaring upward at an estimated 500 miles per hour, and its diameter is expanding over 200 miles of ocean—the distance between New York and Washington D.C. He radios a distress call: "Mayday! Looks like a nuclear explosion."

Later, the crews of two other airlines, KLM and Flying Tigers, also see the cloud. But when these planes land at an Air Force base for a radioactivity check, the Geiger counters register zero—no contamination. As a result, Dr. Daniel Walker of the Hawaii Institute of Geophysics has become one of many scientists worldwide trying to unravel the origins of the mysterious mushroom cloud.

One popular theory suggests a meteorite hit the Earth's cloud deck and disintegrated, producing fragments with enough kinetic energy to heat and evaporate the cloud particles, causing a plume of air to rise like that above a nuclear explosion. However, Dr. Walker



claims, this theory doesn't account for the energy needed to force a cloud upward at 500 miles per hour. He believes the meteor hypothesis has yet to be proven "with good, hard mathematics and physics."

According to Dr. Walker, the only known natural phenomenon capable of producing such rapid and vertical motions are volcanic eruptions at their source. Subsequently, he adds, he looked into the possibility that an underwater volcano had erupted. (The Hawaii Institute has instruments on the ocean floor capable of picking up explosions anywhere in the Pacific.) The result?

"The underwater erup-

tion," says Dr. Walker, "can now be discounted." Apparently, Dr. Walker's instruments did pick up volcanic activity about the same time the cloud was observed. But, he explains, "the rumblings from this submarine volcano occurred at Kaitoku Seamount, 910 miles south of the cloud site."

Nonetheless, Dr. Walker points out, "it is important for the mystery cloud to be solved. One should consider whether a nuclear war would have been started if the cloud had been observed in a more populated area." And unfortunately, he adds, "if you can't explain something in a certain amount of time, people tend to forget about it."

SPACE AGE NOSE BAG

For people with a real allergy problem, the summer months can be torture. Even with medication, constant exposure to the pollen-riddled outside world can make sufferers miserable. But help is here in the form of the Winkworth Hay Fever Helmet, available through Hammacher Schlemmer. A compact fan/filter draws pollen-filled air through an electronically-charged wool filter, purifies it, and blows it through a thirty-inch hose to the wearer's pampered nostrils.

This item seems like a fine idea. But somehow the phrases "summer fun"

and "Winkworth Hay Fever Helmet" don't quite go together. For parties and romantic liaisons, leave your Winkworth home.

Otherwise, the helmet sounds like a good idea for long periods of gardening or other intimate moments with nature. The fan is lightweight and, luckily, one size fits all. It costs a mere \$199.50, and a set of three replacement filters will run you only another \$24.95. Filters last three to four months with normal use. "Normal" is not defined in the literature. Available through Hammacher Schlemmer, (800) 368-3584.

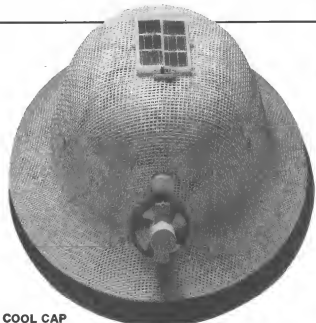


FM LOCKUP

If you're looking for a surefire cure for the FM fade-out blues, you ought to investigate the Parsec 7403 from Parsec Electronics of New York. The obelisk-shaped antenna has a built-in amplifier which greatly increases the strength of the signal you're receiving. The amp raises radio frequencies between fifty and 150 megahertz from a whisper to a roar—as high as twenty-four decibels.

Perhaps the best feature of the Parsec 7403 is its specially designed computer chip. This built-in brain keeps the station's signal from straying every which way, luring it on a path to your meticulous tuned radio.

For \$75 this antenna-amplifier should keep your radio sounds crystal clear. And while it's true we're constantly assaulted with sales propaganda hyping "brand new, best yet" products, this one looks like a sound investment. For more information, contact Parsec at (212) 308-1560.



COOL CAP

It's a fact of life that if you want to protect your head from the sun, you have to wear a hat. It's also true that, if you want to express some fashion sense on your winter vacations, a hat is a must. But how can you be both fashionable and

practical, and still stay within a budget?

Try the Solar Hat, available from Sharper Image. Fashionable? Of course. The safari-style weave is understated, and white is a classic color that never offends. But the real plus is in the

Solar Hat's ability to keep you cool. That's right—the Solar Hat doesn't just keep the sun out, it keeps the shade in. Six solar power cells mounted on top of the hat power a fan that sends a cool breeze whisking across your forehead. Just soak the absorbent foam headband pad in water and stay cool all day.

Two AA batteries will give you a breeze if you're out of the sun's direct path, but still feeling its effects. And at only eight ounces, the Solar Hat's not a real headache either.

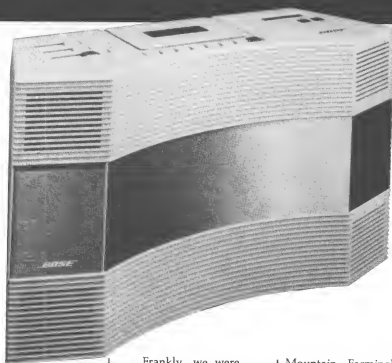
So be the first one on your block with portable central air conditioning. It's yours for \$59 on discount from The Sharper Image Catalog. Just call their twenty-four-hour, toll-free number (800) 344-4444.

FUTUREWAVE

Acoustic-wave technology is here. The Bose Music System, the 18" x 11" x 8" cassette deck and stereo radio pictured right, uses seventy inches of tubing wrapped around itself to create a unique air-aided sound system. Special placement of the bass drive within the unit helps to deliver unparalleled bass sound. Dr. Bose's latest bit of wizardry ran him \$15 million in research, money well spent, as the Bose Music System produces a sound superior to systems several times its size.

The deck runs on either ten D-cell batteries, or an AC outlet, and, at eighteen pounds, can be

taken anywhere. Considering the development costs, the deck is reasonable at \$649.



Frankly, we were seduced by the design as well.

For information write to Bose Corporation, The

Mountain, Farmingham, MA 10701. You can also call them toll free at (800) 282-BOSE for more details.



PAINTOCIDE

You've tried everything. Roach Motels. Four-hour bug grenades. But your roaches have mutated so creatively that they snort Raid to get a buzz. Still they keep coming, those creepy crawlers.

What's a human to do?

Well, the best idea, according to its makers at Barrier Science, is Bug-X, which is composed of a mixture of latex paint and a small but highly lethal amount of an EPA-approved insecticide called chlorpyrifos. Paint a surface with the mixture and the insecticide molecules rise to the top layer.

When a bug walks across the paint, its mucous-filled legs absorb the insecticide, and the critter keels over within

four hours. The coating supposedly works for two years.

Barrier Science says that this virtually odorless preparation is harmless to adults and notes that the danger to small children and pets is "almost" nonexistent. The danger in "almost" is left to the consumer's determination.

But the effect Bug-X has on insects has been thoroughly documented. For twenty-five dollars you can buy a quart of the lethal coating and begin your crusade against flies, roaches, ants, fleas, mosquitos, spiders, termites, and a host of other unwelcome guests.

For more information, call Barrier Science at (914) 856-6633.

Dark gods, nuclear reactors, and the war of the sexists

TO NUKE, OR NOT TO NUKE?
Dear Editor:

In very belated response to Richard Katz's letter (April '85) in which he wrote—referring to Roger Dunkley's "Twisted Shadow," a story which ran in your Feb. 1985 issue—"In reality, nuclear plants do not blow up":

What will happen if a nuclear plant gets hit by a tornado? Or an earthquake? Or an airliner—or even a band of terrorists...?

—Ronald Jackowski
Linden, New Jersey

Actually, Ronald, it's *always* been our impression that such things are taken into account in the building of nuclear reactors—though we do

wonder about certain cases we've heard mention of, like that reactor in California supposedly built directly above a geologic fault. We don't know enough about the subject to give an authoritative answer, but perhaps there's a reader out there informed enough to enlighten us all.

Any takers?

CTHULHU GETS A WRONG NUMBER

Dear Editor:

Being a faithful Lovecraftian and avid role-playing gamer, I was very excited to see Gahan Wilson's "I Hear You Callin, Cthulhu" (August '85) on the Call of Cthulhu game system and the people who play it. It is gratifying to see a magazine primarily aimed at the mainstream market focusing on lesser-known topics such as Lovecraft and the new game based on his work. I was, however, much surprised at T.E.D. Klein's comments regarding these games in his last introductory column. I am led to assume that Ted has rarely, if ever, actually played one of the many RPGs on the market lately. I can well understand how he might have been put off or confused by all the charts and statistics of such games. What Ted does not realize is that the FRG rules are only meant as guidelines for the participants, not as gospel. Indeed, given an awful game-master, a game could turn into a silly shoot-'em-up scenario, but that is the point I am trying to make. The good gamemaster creates his own moods when running a game and does not rely on rules and dice only. That is the stuff of beginners, which is only to be expected. Maybe one day Ted will have the opportunity to play the game himself, with an experienced game-master at the helm. I also wish him luck with his next novel (I loved his first, *The Ceremonies*). And by the way, guess who the "delighted fourteen-year-old" Gahan Wilson mentioned in his article is? I'll give you one guess!

—Scott D. Briggs
Levittown, New York

P.S. I'm 17 now.

OOPS!

Dear Editor:

I think you should submit the announcement that you ran in your October 1985 issue for the Fifth Annual Short Story Contest as an entry in the Fifth Annual Short Story Contest! I certainly felt like I was in the Twilight Zone when I read the piece. Above the prize money section, you state "Maximum story length: four thousand words." Then you go on to say, in rule Number 1: "All entries must be ... two thousand words or less." I am further baffled at the promise (remember we are reading the October '85 issue) that winning stories will be published in the April '85 issue. I'm already too late! I'm reduced to jelly when I read that I must address my entry to SHORT SHORT CONTEST when the same (?) announcement in the August '85 issue directed me to mail it to STORY CONTEST. I can hardly wait to see the November announcement! In any case, I have already mailed my entry of incorrect length to an undetermined destination, secure in the knowledge that if I win, I will be honored in a back issue.

—Chris Renten
Poughkeepsie, New York

Rest assured, Chris, that we'll read any manuscript up to four thousand words long.

ONE LAST PRO-SMUT LETTER Dear Editor:

[Re TZ April '85] The fiction was great, while the drive-in essay and cartoon were hilarious. I'm still laughing about the guy with the soul of an Atlantic plankton ... Maybe some of those readers who were offended by a sketch of a woman's breasts share his affliction. I'd like to tell those jerks that half of all teenagers happen to see breasts every day—their own. Girls are people too!

Just had to get it off my—dare I say it—chest!

—Elaine Radford
New Orleans, Louisiana



THE TWILIGHT ZONE POSTCARD SERIES

THIS FINE QUALITY SET INCLUDES ROD SERLING WITH THE ELEMENTS PLUS NINE FAMOUS EPISODES. WILLIAM SHATNER, AGNES MOOREHEAD, ART CARNEY AND ROBBY THE ROBOT ARE FEATURED AMONG OTHERS. TEN CARD SET \$6.00. TWO OR MORE SETS \$5.50 EACH.

AMERICAN POSTCARD COMPANY
285 LAFAYETTE STREET, BOX 3D
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10012



An excerpt from the novel due out next month from Knopf.

The

by ANNE RICE

The following nights were a rampage. I began to drink up Paris as if the city were blood. In the early evening I raided the worst sections, tangling with thieves and killers, often giving them a playful chance to defend themselves, then snarling them in a fatal embrace and feasting to the point of gluttony.

I savored different types of kills: big lumbering creatures, small wiry ones, the hirsute and the dark-skinned, but my favorite was the very young scoundrel who'd kill you for the coins in your pocket.

I loved their grunting and cursing. Sometimes I held them with one hand and laughed at them till they were in a positive fury, and I threw their knives over the rooftops and smashed their pistols to pieces against the walls. But in all this my full strength was like a cat never allowed to spring. And the one thing I loathed in them was fear. If a victim was really afraid, I usually lost interest.

As time went on, I learned to postpone the kill. I drank a little from one, and more from another, and then took the grand wallop of the death itself from the third or the fourth one. It was the chase and the struggle that I was multiplying for my own pleasure. And when I'd had enough of all this hunting and drinking in an evening to content some six healthy vampires, I turned my eyes to the rest of Paris, all the glorious pastimes I couldn't afford before.

But not before going to Roget's house for news of Nicolas or my mother.

Her letters were brimming with happiness at my good fortune, and she promised to go to Italy in the spring if only she could get the strength to do it. Right now she wanted books from Paris, of course, and newspapers and keyboard music for the harpsichord I'd sent. And she had to know, Was I truly happy? Had I fulfilled my dreams? She was leery of wealth. I had been so happy at Renaud's. I must confide in her.

Vampire Lestat

Lestat has been in hiding ever since becoming a vampire. But soon his love of the stage, and of the thespians he left behind, will begin to lure him—into the night life.

It was agony to hear these words read to me. Time to become a liar in earnest, which I had never been. But for her I would do it.

As for Nicki, I should have known he wouldn't settle for gifts and vague tales, that he would demand to see me and keep on demanding it. He was frightening Roget a little bit.

But it didn't do any good. There was nothing the attorney could tell him except what I've explained. And I was so wary of seeing Nicki that I didn't even ask for the location of the house into which he'd moved. I told the lawyer to make certain he studied with his Italian maestro and that he had everything he could possibly desire.

But I did manage somehow to hear quite against my will that Nicolas hadn't quit the theater. He was still playing at Renaud's House of Thesbians.

Now this maddened me. Why the hell, I thought, should he do that?

Because he loved it there, the same as I had, that was why. Did anybody really have to tell me this? We had all been kindred in that little rattrap playhouse. Don't think about the moment when the curtain goes up, when the audience begins to clap and shout...

No. Send cases of wine and champagne to the theater. Send flowers for Jeannette and Luchina, the girls I had fought with the most and most loved, and more gifts of gold for Renaud. Pay off the debts he had.

But as the nights passed and these gifts were dispatched, Renaud became embarrassed about all this. A fortnight later, Roget told me Renaud had made a good proposal.

He wanted me to buy the House of Thesbians and keep him on as manager with enough capital to stage larger and more wondrous spectacles than he'd ever before attempted. With my money and his cleverness, we could make the house the talk of Paris.

I didn't answer right away. It took me more than a moment to realize that I could own the theater just like that. Own it like the gems in the chest, or the clothes I wore, or the dollhouse I'd sent to my nieces. I said no, and went out slamming the door.

Then I came right back.

"All right, buy the theater," I said, "and give him ten thousand crowns to do whatever he wants." This was a fortune. And I didn't even know why I had done this.

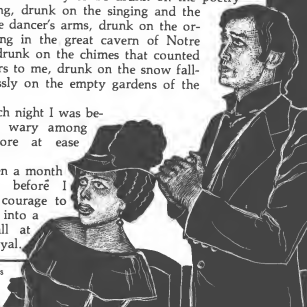
This pain will pass, I thought, it has to. And I must gain some control over my thoughts, realize that these things cannot affect me.

After all, where did I spend my time now? At the grandest theaters in Paris. I had the finest seats for the ballet and the opera, for the dramas of Molière and Racine. I was hanging about before the footlights, gazing up at the great actors and actresses. I had suits made in every color of the rainbow, jewels on my fingers, wigs in the latest fashion, shoes with diamond buckles as well as gold heels.

And I had eternity to be drunk on the poetry I was hearing, drunk on the singing and the sweep of the dancer's arms, drunk on the organ throbbing in the great cavern of Notre Dame and drunk on the chimes that counted out the hours to me, drunk on the snow falling soundlessly on the empty gardens of the Tuileries.

And each night I was becoming less wary among mortals, more at ease with them.

Not even a month had passed before I got up the courage to plunge right into a crowded ball at the Palais Royal.



The Vampire Lestat

I was warm and ruddy from the kill and at once I joined the dance. I didn't arouse the slightest suspicion. Rather the women seemed drawn to me, and I loved the touch of their hot fingers and the soft crush of their arms and their breasts.

After that, I bore right into the early evening crowds in the boulevards. Rushing past Renaud's, I squeezed into the other houses to see the puppet shows, the mimes, and the acrobats. I didn't flee from street lamps anymore. I went into cafés and bought coffee just to feel the warmth of it against my fingers, and I spoke to men when I chose.

I even argued with them about the state of the monarchy, and I went madly into mastering billiards and card games, and it seemed to me I might go right into the House of Thesbians if I wanted to, buy a ticket and slip up into the balcony and see what was going on. See Nicolas!

Well, I didn't do that. What was I dreaming of to go near to Nicki? It was one thing to fool strangers, men and women who'd never known me, but what would Nicolas see if he looked into my eyes? What would he see when he looked at my skin? Besides I had too much to do, I told myself.

I was learning more and more about my nature and my powers.

My hair, for example, was lighter, yet thicker, and grew not at all. Nor did my fingernails and toenails, which had a greater luster, though if I filed them away, they would regenerate during the day to the length they had been when I died. And though people couldn't discern such secrets on inspection, they sensed other things, an unnatural gleam to my eyes, too many reflected colors in them, and a faint luminescence to my skin.

When I was hungry this luminescence was very marked. All the more reason to feed.

And I was learning that I could put people in thrall if I stared at them too hard, and my voice required very strict modulation. I might speak too low for mortal hearing, and were I to shout or laugh too loud, I could shatter another's ears. I could hurt my own ears.

There were other difficulties: my movements. I tended to walk, to run, to dance, and to smile and gesture like a human being, but if surprised, horrified, grieved, my body could bend and contort like that of an acrobat.

Even my facial expressions could be wildly exaggerated. Once forgetting myself as I walked in the boulevard du Temple, thinking of Nicolas naturally, I sat down beneath a tree, drew up my knees, and put my hands to the side of my head like a stricken elf in a fairy tale. Eighteenth-century gentlemen in brocade frock coats and white silk stockings didn't do things like that, at least not on the street.

And another time, while deep in contemplation of the changing of the light on surfaces, I hopped up and sat with my legs crossed on the top of a

carriage, with my elbows on my knees.

Well, this startled people. It frightened them. But more often than not, even when frightened by the whiteness of my skin, they merely looked away. They deceived themselves, I quickly realized, that everything was explainable. It was the rational eighteenth-century habit of mind.

After all, there hadn't been a case of witchcraft in a hundred years, the last that I knew of being the trial of La Voisin, a fortune-teller, burnt alive in the time of Louis the Sun King.

And this was Paris. So if I accidentally crushed crystal glasses when I lifted them, or slammed doors back into the walls when opening them, people assumed I was drunk.

But now and then I answered questions before mortals had asked them of me. I fell into stuporous states just looking at candles or tree branches, and didn't move for so long that people asked if I was ill.

And my worst problem was laughter. I would go into fits of laughter and I couldn't stop. Anything could set me off. The sheer madness of my own position might set me off.

This can still happen to me fairly easily. No loss, no pain, no deepening understanding of my predicament changes it. Something strikes me as funny. I begin to laugh and I can't stop.

It makes other vampires furious, by the way. But I jump ahead of the tale.

As you have probably noticed, I have made no mention of other vampires. The fact was I could not find any.

I could find no other supernatural being in all of Paris.

Mortals to the left of me, mortals to the right of me, and now and then—just when I'd convinced myself it wasn't happening at all—I'd feel that vague and maddeningly elusive *presence*.

It was never any more substantial than it had been the first night in the village churchyard. And invariably it was in the vicinity of a Paris cemetery.

Always, I'd stop, turn and try to draw it out. But it was never any good; the thing was gone before I could be certain of it. I could never find it on my own, and the stench of city cemeteries was so revolting I wouldn't, couldn't, go into them.

This was coming to seem more than fastidiousness or bad memories of my own dungeon beneath the tower. Revulsion at the sight or smell of death seemed part of my nature.

I couldn't watch executions any more than when I was that trembling boy from the Auvergne, and corpses made me cover my face. I think I was offended by death unless I was the cause of it! And I had to get clean away from my dead victims almost immediately.

But to return to the matter of the *presence*. I came to wonder if it wasn't some other species of haunt, something that couldn't commune with me.

On the other hand, I had the distinct impression that *the presence* was watching me, maybe even deliberately revealing itself to me.

Whatever the case, I saw no other vampires in Paris. And I was beginning to wonder if there could be more than one of us at any given time. Maybe Magnus destroyed the vampire from whom he stole the blood. Maybe he had to perish once he passed on his powers. And I too would die if I were to make another vampire.

But no, that didn't make sense. Magnus had had great strength even after giving me his blood. And he had bound his vampire victim in chains when he stole his powers.

An enormous mystery, and a maddening one. But for the moment, ignorance was truly bliss. And I was doing very well discovering things without the help of Magnus. And maybe this was what Magnus had intended. Maybe this had been his way of learning centuries ago.

I remembered his words, that in the secret chamber of the tower I would find all that I needed to prosper.

The women seemed drawn to me, and I loved the touch of their hot fingers and the soft crush of their arms and their breasts.

The hours flew as I roamed the city. And only to conceal myself in the tower by day did I ever deliberately leave the company of human beings.

Yet I was beginning to wonder: "If you can dance with them, and play billiards with them and talk with them, then why can't you dwell among them, just the way you did when you were living? Why couldn't you *pass* for one of them? And enter again into the very fabric of life where there is ... what? Say it!"

And here it was nearly spring. And the nights were getting warmer, and the House of Thesbians was putting on a new drama with new acrobats between the acts. And the trees were in bloom again, and every waking moment I thought of Nicki.

One night in March, I realized as Roget read my mother's letter to me that I could read as well as he could. I had learned from a thousand sources how to read without even trying. I took the letter home with me.

Even the inner chamber was no longer really cold. And I sat by the window reading my mother's

words for the first time in private. I could almost hear her voice speaking to me:

"Nicolas writes that you have purchased Renaud's. So you own the little theater on the boulevard where you were so happy. But do you possess the happiness still? When will you answer me?"

I folded up the letter and put it in my pocket. The blood tears were coming into my eyes. Why must she understand so much, yet so little?

The wind had lost its sting. All the smells of the city were coming back. And the markets were full of flowers. I dashed to Roget's house without even thinking of what I was doing and demanded that he tell me where Nicolas lived.

I would just have a look at him, make certain he was in good health, be certain the house was fine enough.

It was on the Ile St.-Louis, and very impressive just as I'd wanted, but the windows were all shuttered along the quais.

I stood watching it for a long time, as one carriage after another roared over the nearby bridge. And I knew that I had to see Nicki.

I started to climb the wall just as I had climbed walls in the village, and I found it amazingly easy. One storey after another I climbed, much higher than I had ever dared to climb in the past, and then I sped over the roof, and down the inside of the courtyard to look for Nicki's flat.

I passed a handful of open windows before I came to the right one. And then there was Nicolas in the glare of the supper table and Jeannette and Luchina were with him, and they were having the late night meal that we used to take together when the theater closed.

At the first sight of him, I drew back away from the casement and closed my eyes. I might have fallen if my right hand hadn't held fast to the wall as if with a will of its own. I had seen the room for only an instant, but every detail was fixed in my mind.

He was dressed in old green velvet, finery he'd worn so casually in the crooked streets at home. But everywhere around him were signs of the wealth I'd sent him, leatherbound books on the shelves, and an inlaid desk with an oval painting above it, and the Italian violin gleaming atop the new pianoforte.

He wore a jeweled ring I'd sent, and his brown hair was tied back with a black silk ribbon, and he sat brooding with his elbows on the table, eating nothing from the expensive china plate before him.

Carefully I opened my eyes and looked at him again. All his natural gifts were there in a blaze of light: the delicate but strong limbs, large sober brown eyes, and his mouth that for all the irony and sarcasm that could come out of it was childlike and ready to be kissed.

There seemed in him a frailty I'd never per-

The Vampire Lestat

ceived nor understood. Yet he looked infinitely intelligent, my Nicki, full of tangled, uncompromising thoughts, as he listened to Jeannette, who was talking rapidly.

"Lestat's married," she said as Luchina nodded, "the wife's rich, and he can't let her know he was a common actor, it's simple enough."

"I say we let him in peace," Luchina said. "He saved the theater from closing, and he showers us with gifts ..."

"I don't believe it," Nicolas said bitterly. "He wouldn't be ashamed of us." There was a suppressed rage in his voice, an ugly grief. "And why did he leave the way he did? I heard him calling me! The window was smashed to pieces! I tell you I was half awake, and I heard his voice ..."

An uneasy silence fell among them. They didn't believe his account of things, how I'd vanished from the garret, and telling it again would only isolate him and embitter him further. I could sense this from all their thoughts.

"You didn't really know Lestat," he said now, almost in a surly fashion, returning to the manageable conversation that other mortals would allow him. "Lestat would spit in the face of anyone who would be ashamed of us! He sends me money. What am I supposed to do with it? He plays games with us!"

No answer from the others, the solid, practical beings who would not speak against the mysterious benefactor. Things were going too well.

And in the lengthening silence, I felt the depth of Nicki's anguish; I *knew* it as if I were peering into his skull. And I couldn't bear it.

I couldn't bear delving into his soul without his knowing it. Yet I couldn't stop myself from sensing a vast terrain inside him, grimmer perhaps than I had ever dreamed, and his words came back to me that the darkness in him was like the darkness I'd seen at the inn, and that he tried to conceal it from me.

I could almost see it, this terrain. And in a real way it was beyond his mind, as if his mind were merely a portal to a chaos stretching out from the borders of all we know.

Too frightening that. I didn't want to see it. I didn't want to feel what he felt!

But what could I do for him? That was the important thing. What could I do to stop this torment once and for all?

Yet I wanted so to touch him—his hands, his arms, his face. I wanted to feel his flesh with these new immortal fingers. And I found myself whispering the word, "Alive." Yes, you are alive and that means you can die. And everything I see when I look at you is utterly insubstantial. It is a commingling of tiny movements and indefinable colors as if you haven't a body at all, but are a collection of heat and light. You are light itself, and what am I now?

Eternal as I am, I curl like a cinder in that blaze.

But the atmosphere of the room had changed. Luchina and Jeannette were taking their leave with polite words. He was ignoring them. He had turned to the window, and he was rising as if he'd been called by a secret voice. The look on his face was indescribable.

He knew I was there!

Instantly, I shot up the slippery wall to the roof.

But I could still *hear* him below. I looked down and I saw his naked hands on the window ledge. And through the silence I heard his panic. He'd sensed that I was there! My presence, mind you, that is what he sensed, just as I sensed the *presence* in the graveyards, but how, he argued with himself, could Lestat have been here?

I was too shocked to do anything. I clung to the roof gutter, and I could feel the departure of the others, feel that he was now alone. And all I could think was, What in the name of hell is this



presence that he felt?

I mean I wasn't Lestat anymore, I was this demon, this powerful and greedy vampire, and yet he felt my presence, the presence of Lestat, the young man he knew!

It was a very different thing from a mortal seeing my face and blurring out my name in confusion. He had recognized in my monster self something that he knew and loved.

I stopped listening to him. I merely lay on the roof.

But I knew he was moving below. I knew it when he lifted the violin from its place on the piano-forte, and I knew he was again at the window.

And I put my hands over my ears.

Still the sound came. It came rising out of the instruments, cleaving the night as if it were some shining element other than air and light and matter that might climb to the very stars.

He bore down on the strings, and I could almost see him against my eyelids, swaying back

and forth, his head bowed against the violin as if he meant to pass into the music, and then all sense of him vanished and there was only the sound.

The long vibrant notes, and the chilling glissandos, and the violin singing in its own tongue to make every other form of speech seem false. Yet as the song deepened, it became the very essence of despair as if its beauty were a horrid coincidence, grotesquery without a particle of truth.

Was this what he believed, what he had always believed when I talked on and on about goodness? Was he making the violin say it? Was he deliberately creating those long, pure liquid notes to say that beauty meant nothing because it came from the despair inside him, and it had nothing to do with the despair finally, because the despair wasn't beautiful, and beauty then was a horrid irony?

I didn't know the answer. But the sound went beyond him as it always had. It grew bigger than the despair. It fell effortlessly into a slow melody like water seeking its own downward mountain path. It grew richer and darker still and there seemed something undisciplined and chastening in it, and heartbreaking and vast. I lay on my back on the roof now with my eyes on the stars.

Pinpoints of light mortals could not have seen. Phantom clouds. And the raw, piercing sound of the violin coming slowly with exquisite tension to a close.

I didn't move.

I was in some silent understanding of the language the violin spoke to me. Nicki, if we could talk again ... If "our conversation" could only continue.

Beauty wasn't the treachery he imagined it to be, rather it was an uncharted land where one could make a thousand fatal errors, a wild and indifferent paradise without signposts of evil or good.

In spite of all the refinements of civilization that conspired to make art—the dizzying perfection of the string quartet or the sprawling grandeur of Fragonard's canvases—beauty was savage. It was as dangerous and lawless as the earth had been aeons before man had one single coherent thought in his head or wrote codes of conduct on tablets of clay. Beauty was a Savage Garden.

So why must it wound him that the most despairing music is full of beauty? Why must it hurt him and make him cynical and sad and untrusting?

Good and evil, those are concepts man has made. And man is better, really, than the Savage Garden.

But maybe deep inside Nicki had always dreamed of a harmony among all things that I had always know was impossible. Nicki had dreamed not of goodness, but of justice.

But we could never discuss these things now with each other. We could never again be in the inn. Forgive me, Nicki. Good and evil exist still,

as they always will. But "our conversation" is over forever.

Yet even as I left the roof, as I stole silently away from the Ile St.-Louis, I knew what I meant to do.

I didn't admit it to myself, but I knew.

The next night it was already late when I reached the boulevard du Temple. I'd fed well in the Ile de la Cité, and the first act at Renaud's House of Thesbians was already underway.

I dressed as if I were going to Court, in silver brocade with a lavender velvet roquelaure over my shoulders. I had a new sword with a deep-carved silver handle and the usual heavy, ornate buckles on my shoes, the usual lace, gloves, tricorn. And I came to the theater in a hired carriage.

But as soon as I paid the driver I went back to the alley and opened the stage door exactly as I used to do.

At once the old atmosphere surrounded me, the smell of the thick greasypaint and the cheap costumes full of sweat and perfume, and the dust. I could see a fragment of the lighted stage burning beyond the helter-skelter of hulking props and hear bursts of laughter from the hall. A group of acrobats waited to go on at the intermezzo, a crowd of jesters in red tights, caps, and dagged collars studded with little gold bells.

I felt dizzy, and for a moment afraid. The place felt close and dangerous over my head, and yet it was wonderful to be inside it again. And a sadness was swelling inside me, no, a panic, actually.

Luchina saw me and let out a shriek. Doors opened everywhere on the cluttered little dressing rooms. Renaud plunged toward me and pumped my hand. Where there had been nothing but wood and drapery a moment before, there was now a little universe of excited human beings, faces full of high color and dampness, and I found myself drawing back from a smoking candelabra with the quick words, "My eyes ... put it out."

"Put out the candles, they hurt his eyes, can't you see that?" Jeannette insisted sharply. I felt her wet lips open against my face. Everyone was around me, even the acrobats who didn't know me, and the old scene painters and carpenters who had taught me so many things. Luchina said, "Get Nicki," and I almost cried, No.

Applause was shaking the little house. The curtain was being pulled closed from either side. At once the old actors were upon me, and Renaud was calling for champagne.

I was holding my hands over my eyes as if like the basilisk I'd kill every one of them if I looked at them, and I could feel tears and knew that before they saw the blood in the tears, I had to wipe the tears away. But they were so close I couldn't get to

The Vampire Lestat

my handkerchief, and with a sudden terrible weakness I put my arms around Jeannette and Luchina, and I pressed my face against Luchina's face. Like birds they were, with bones full of air, and hearts like beating wings, and for one second I listened with a vampire's ear to the blood in them, but that seemed an obscenity. And I just gave in the hugging and the kissing, ignoring the thump of their hearts, and holding them and smelling their powdered skin, and feeling again the press of their lips.

"You don't know how you worried us!" Renaud was booming, "And then the stories of your good fortune! Everyone, everyone!" He was clapping his hands. "It's Monsieur de Valois, the owner of this great theatrical establishment . . ." and he said a lot of other pompous and playful things, dragging up the new actors and actresses to kiss my hand, I suppose, or my feet. I was holding tight to the girls as if I'd explode into fragments if I let them go, and then I heard Nicki, and knew he was only a foot away, staring at me, and that he was too glad to see me to be hurt anymore.

I didn't open my eyes but I felt his hand on my face, then holding tight to the back of my neck. They must have made way for him and when he came into my arms, I felt a little convulsion of terror, but the light was dim here, and I had fed furiously to be warm and human-looking, and I thought desperately, I don't know to whom I pray to make the deception work. And then there was only Nicolas and I didn't care.

I looked up and into his face.

How to describe what humans look like to us! I've tried to describe it a little, when I spoke of Nicki's beauty the night before as a mixture of movement and color. But you can't imagine what it's like for us to look on living flesh. There are those billions of colors and tiny configurations of movement, yes, that make up a living creature on whom we concentrate. But the radiance mingles totally with the carnal scent. Beautiful, that's what any human being is to us, if we stop to consider it, even the old and the diseased, the downtrodden that one doesn't really "see" in the street. They are all like that, like flowers ever in the process of opening, butterflies ever unfolding out of the cocoon.

Well, I saw all this when I saw Nicki, and I smelled the blood pumping in him, and for one heady moment I felt love and only love obliterating every recollection of the horrors that had deformed me. Every evil rapture, every new power with its gratification, seemed unreal. Maybe I felt a profound joy, too, that I could still love, if I'd ever doubted it, and that a tragic victory had been confirmed.

All the old mortal comfort intoxicated me, and I could have closed my eyes and slipped from consciousness carrying him with me, or so it seemed.

But something else stirred in me, collecting strength so fast my mind raced to catch up with it and deny it even as it threatened to grow out of control. And I knew it for what it was, something monstrous and enormous and natural to me as the sun was unnatural. I wanted Nicki. I wanted him as surely as any victim I'd ever struggled with in the Ile de la Cité. I wanted his blood flowing into me, wanted its taste and its smell and its heat.

The little place shook with shouts and laughter. Renaud telling the acrobats to get on with the intermezzo and Luchina opening the champagne. But we were closed off in this embrace.

The hard heat of his body made me stiffen and draw back, though it seemed I didn't move at all. And it maddened me suddenly that this one whom I loved even as I loved my mother and my brothers — this one who had drawn from me the only tenderness I'd ever felt — was an unconquerable citadel, holding fast in ignorance against my thirst for blood when so many hundreds of victims had so easily given it up.

This was what I'd been made for. This was the path I had been meant to walk. What were those others to me now — the thieves and killers I'd cut down in the wilderness of Paris? This was what I wanted. And the great awesome possibility of Nicki's death exploded in my brain. The darkness against my closed eyelids had become blood red. Nicki's mind emptying in that last moment, giving up its complexity with its life.

I couldn't move. I could feel the blood as if it were passing into me and I let my lips rest against his neck. Every particle in me said, "Take him, spirit him out of this place and away from it and feed on him and feed on him . . . until . . ." Until what! Until he's dead!

I broke loose and pushed him away. The crowd around us roared and rattled. Renaud was shouting at the acrobats, who stood staring at these proceedings. The audience outside demanded the intermezzo entertainment with a steady rhythmic clap. The orchestra was fiddling away at the lively ditty that would accompany the acrobats. Bones and flesh poked and pushed at me. A shambles it had become, rank with the smell of those ready for the slaughter. I felt the all too human rise of nausea.

Nicki seemed to have lost his equilibrium, and when our eyes met, I felt the accusations emanating from him. I felt the misery and, worse, the near despair.

I pushed past all of them, past the acrobats with the jingling bells, and I don't know why I went forward to the wings instead of out the side door. I wanted to see the stage. I wanted to see the audience. I wanted to penetrate deeper into something for which I had no name or word.

But I was mad in these moments. To say I

wanted or I thought makes no sense at all.

My chest was heaving and the thirst was like a cat clawing to get out. And as I leaned against the wooden beam beside the curtain, Nicki, hurt and misunderstanding everything, came to me again.

I let the thirst rage. I let it tear at my insides. I just clung to the rafter and I saw in one great recollection all my victims, the scum of Paris, scraped up from its gutters, and I knew the madness of the course I'd chosen, and the lie of it, and what I really was. What a sublime idiocy that I had dragged that paltry morality with me, striking down the damned ones only—seeking to be saved in spite of it all? What had I thought I was, a righteous partner to the judges and executioners of Paris who strike down the poor for crimes that the rich commit every day?

Strong wine I'd had, in chipped and broken vessels, and now the priest was standing before me at the foot of the altar with the golden chalice in his hands, and the wine inside it was the Blood of the Lamb.

I wanted his blood flowing into
me, wanted its taste and its smell
and its heat.

Nicki was talking rapidly, "Lestat, what is it? Tell me!" as if the others couldn't hear us. "Where have you been? What's happened to you? Lestat!"

"Get on that stage!" Renaud thundered at the gaping acrobats. They trotted past us into the smoky blaze of the footlamps and went into a chain of somersaults.

The orchestra made its instruments into twittering birds. A flash of red, harlequin sleeves, bells jangling, taunts from the unruly crowd, "Show us something, really show us something!"

Luchina kissed me and I stared at her white throat, her milky hands. I could see the veins in Jeannette's face and the soft cushion of her lower lip coming ever closer. The champagne, splashed into dozens of little glasses, was being drunk. Some speech was issuing forth from Renaud about our "partnership" and how tonight's little farce was but the beginning and we would soon be the grandest theater on the boulevards. I saw myself decked out for the part of Lelio, and heard the ditty I had sung to Flaminia on bended knee.

Before me, little mortals flipfopped heavily and the audience was howling as the leader of the acrobats made some vulgar movement with his hind end.

Before I even meant to do it, I had gone out on the stage.

I was standing in the very center, feeling the heat of the footlights, the smoke stinging my eyes. I stared at the crowded gallery, the screened boxes, the rows and rows of spectators to the back wall. And I heard myself snarl a command for the acrobats to get away.

It seemed the laughter was deafening, and the taunts and shouts that greeted me were spasms and eruptions, and quite plainly behind every face in the house was a grinning skull. I was humming the little ditty I'd sung as Lelio, no more than a fragment of the part, but the one I'd carried in the streets afterwards with me, "lovely, lovely, Flaminia," and on and on, the words forming meaningless sounds.

Insults were cutting through the din.

"On with the performance!" And "You're handsome enough, now let's see some action!" From the gallery someone threw a half-eaten apple that came thumping just past my feet.

I unclasped the violet roquelaure and let it fall. I did the same with the silver sword.

The song had become an incoherent humming behind my lips, but mad poetry was pounding in my head. I saw the wilderness of beauty and its savagery, the way I'd seen it last night when Nicki was playing, and the moral world seemed some desperate dream of rationality that in this lush and fetid jungle had not the slightest chance. It was a vision and I saw rather than understood, except that I was part of it, natural as the cat with her exquisite and passionless face digging her claws into the back of the screaming rat.

"'Handsome enough' is this Grim Reaper," I half uttered, "who can snuff all these 'brief candles,' every fluttering soul sucking the air, from this hall."

But the words were really beyond my reach. They floated in some stratum perhaps where a god existed who understood the colors patterned on a cobra's skin and the eight glorious notes that make up the music erupting out of Nicki's instrument, but never the principle, beyond ugliness or beauty, "Thou shalt not kill."

Hundreds of greasy faces peered back at me from the gloom. Shabby wigs and paste jewels and filthy finery, skin like water flowing over crooked bones. A crew of ragged beggars whistled and hooted from the gallery, humpback and one eye, and stinking underarm crutch, and teeth the color of the skull's teeth you sift from the dirt of the grave.

I threw out my arms. I crooked my knee, and I began turning as the acrobats and dancers could turn, round and around on the ball of one foot, effortlessly, going faster and faster, until I broke, flipping over backward into a circle of cartwheels,

The Vampire Lestat

and then somersaults, imitating everything I had ever seen the players at the fairs perform.

Applause came immediately. I was agile, as I'd been in the village, and the stage was tiny and hampering, and the ceiling seemed to press down on me, and the smoke from the footlights to close me in. The little song to Flaminia came back to me and I started singing it loudly as I turned and jumped and spun again, and then gazing at the ceiling I willed my body upwards as I bent my knees to spring.

In an instant I touched the rafters and I was dropping down gracefully, soundlessly to the boards.

Gasps rose from the audience. The little crowd in the wings was stunned. The musicians in the pit who had been silent all the while were turning to one another. They could see there was no wire.

But I was soaring again to the delight of the audience, this somersaulting all the way up, beyond the painted arch again to descend in even slower finer turns.

Shouts and cheers broke out over the clapping, but those backstage were mute. Nicki stood at the every edge, his lips silently shaping my name.

"It has to be trickery, an illusion." The same avowals came from all directions. People demanded agreement from those around them. Renaud's face shone before me for an instant with gaping mouth and squinting eyes.

But I had gone into a dance again. And this time the grace of it no longer mattered to the audience. I could feel it, because the dance became a parody, each gesture broader, longer, slower than a human dancer could have sustained.

Someone shouted from the wings and was told to be still. And little cries burst from the musicians and those in the front rows. People were growing uneasy and whispering to one another, but the rabble in the gallery continued to clap.

I dashed suddenly toward the audience as if I meant to admonish it for rudeness. Several persons were so startled they rose and tried to escape into the aisles. One of the hornplayers dropped his instrument and climbed out of the pit.

I could see the agitation, even the anger in their faces. What were these illusions? It wasn't amusing them suddenly; they couldn't comprehend the skill of it; and something in my serious manner made them afraid. For one terrible moment, I felt their helplessness.

And I felt their doom.

A great horde of jangling skeletons snared in flesh and rags, that's what they were, and yet their courage blazed out of them, they shouted at me in their irrepressible pride.

I raised my hands slowly to command their attention, and very loudly and steadily I sang the ditty to Flaminia, my lovely Flaminia, a dull little couplet spilling into another couplet, and I let my

voice grow louder and louder until suddenly people were rising and screaming before me, but louder still I sang it until it obliterated every other noise and in the intolerable roar I saw them all, hundreds of them, overturning the benches as they stood up, their hands clamped to the sides of their heads.

Their mouths were grimaces, toneless screams.

Pandemonium. Shrieks, curses, all stumbling and struggling toward the doors. Curtains were pulled from their fastenings. Men dropped down from the gallery to rush for the street.

I stopped the horrid song.

I stood watching them in a ringing silence, the weak, sweating bodies straining clumsily in every direction. The wind gusted from the open doorways, and I felt a strange coldness over all my limbs and it seemed my eyes were made of glass.

Without looking, I picked up the sword and put it on again, and hooked my finger into the velvet collar of my crumpled and dusty roquelaure. All these gestures seemed as grotesque as everything else I had done, and it seemed of no import that Nicolas was trying to get loose from two of the actors who held him in fear of his life as he shouted my name.

But something out of the chaos caught my attention. It did seem to matter—to be terribly, terribly important, in fact—that there was a figure standing above in one of the open boxes who did not struggle to escape or even move.

I turned slowly and looked up at him, daring him, it seemed, to remain there. An old man he was, and his dull grey eyes were boring into me with stubborn outrage, and as I glared at him, I heard myself let out a loud, open-mouthed roar. Out of my soul it seemed to come, this sound. It grew louder and louder until those few left below cowered again with their ears stopped, and even Nicolas, rushing forward, buckled beneath the sound of it, both hands clasped to his head.

And yet the man stood there in the loge growling, indignant and old, and stubborn, with furrowed brows under his grey wig.

I stepped back and leapt across the empty house, landing in the box directly before him, and his jaw fell in spite of himself and his eyes grew hideously wide.

He seemed deformed with age, his shoulders rounded, his hands gnarled, but the spirit in his eyes was beyond vanity and beyond compromise. His mouth hardened and his chin jutted. And from under his frock coat he pulled his pistol and he aimed it at me with both hands.

"Lestat!" Nicki shouted.

But the shot exploded and the ball hit me with full force. I didn't move. I stood as steady as the old man had stood before, and the pain rolled through me and stopped, leaving in its wake a terrible pulling in all my veins.

The blood poured out. It flowed as I have never seen blood flow. It drenched my shirt and I could feel it spilling down my back. But the pulling grew stronger and stronger, and a warm tingling sensation had commenced to spread across the surface of my back and chest.

The man stared, dumbfounded. The pistol dropped out of his hand. His head went back, eyes blind, and his body crumpled as if the air had been let out of it, and he lay on the floor.

Nicki had raced up the stairs and was now rushing into the box. A low hysterical murmuring was issuing from him. He thought he was witnessing my death.

And I stood still hearkening to my body in that terrible solitude that had been mine since Magnus made me the vampire. And I knew the wounds were no longer there.

The blood was drying on the silk vest, drying on the back of my torn coat. My body throbbed where the bullet had passed through me, and my veins were alive with that same pulling, but the injury was no more.

And Nicolas, coming to his senses as he looked at me, realized I was unharmed, though his reason told him it couldn't be true.

I pushed past him and made for the stairs. He

flung himself against me and I threw him off. I couldn't stand the sight of him, the smell of him.

"Get away from me!" I said.

But he came back again and he locked his arm around my neck. His face was bloated and there was an awful sound coming out of him.

"Let go of me, Nicki!" I threatened him. If I shoved him off too roughly, I'd tear his arms out of the sockets, break his back.

Break his back . . .

He moaned, stuttered. And for one harrowing split second the sounds he made were as terrible as the sound that had come from my dying animal on the mountain, my horse, crushed like an insect into the snow.

I scarcely knew what I was doing when I pried loose his hands.

The crowd broke, screaming, when I walked out onto the boulevard.

Renaud ran forward, in spite of those trying to restrain him.

"Monsieur!" He grabbed my hand to kiss it and stopped, staring at the blood.

"Nothing, my dear Renaud," I said to him, quite surprised at the steadiness of my voice and its softness. But something distracted me as I started to speak again, something I should hearken to, I

(continued on page 110)

MACLAY & ASSOCIATES IS PROUD TO PRESENT

Haunted Castles

The Complete Gothic Tales
of **RAY RUSSELL**



Long out of print, and never before available collected in hardcover, these three dramatic novellas ("Sordanicus," "Sagittarius," and "Sanguinarius") and four gripping shorter tales form a "must" volume for every collector's and library shelf.

Stephen King (of "Sordanicus"): "Perhaps the finest example of the modern Gothic ever written." Christopher Lee (of "Sagittarius"): "A story I have always wanted to film." Washington Star: "[Ray Russell's] mastery of horror motifs, by any comparison test, the best I've read in decades."

ISBN 0-940776-20-0. 492 pages, hardcover. At your bookstore, or send check or money order for \$12.95 plus \$4.00 shipping to: MacLay & Associates, Inc., P.O. Box 16253, Baltimore, MD 21210.

Also available: **Masques**: All-New Works of Horror and the Supernatural. Edited by J.N. Williamson, Beaumont Newhall, Bradbury, McCammon, Matheson, Nolan, Russell, 13 others. Winner of a 1985 Bairo Award. "Superior collection"—**Publishers Weekly**. ISBN 0-940776-18-9. 308 pages, hardcover, \$14.95 plus \$1.00 shipping.

We also offer the following (softcover) chapbooks: **Haur** (novella, 72 pages), **Anamalis** (story collection, 64 pages), and **Nevermore** (story collection, 80 pages), by J.N. Williamson, and **Black & White** (novella, 52 pages), by J.L. Bruce. All four: \$5.75 plus \$1.00 shipping.

Coming: **Nukes**: Four Horror Writers on the Ultimate Horror. **Visual Encounters**: Televisions by William F. Nolan, and **Masques II**.

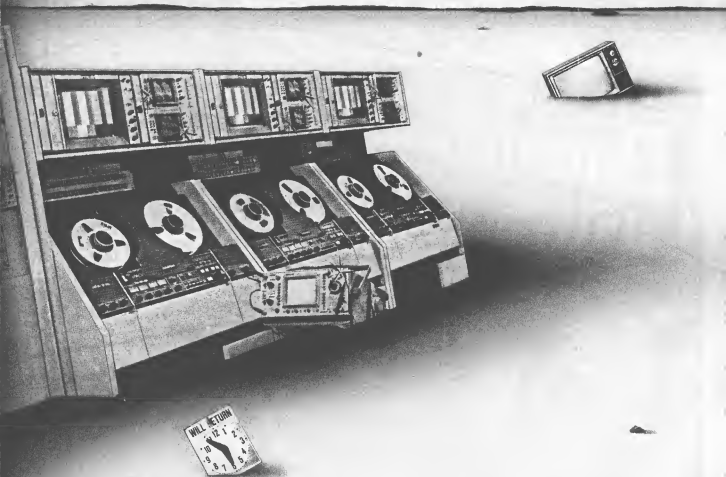
Discounts: bookstores 40%, libraries 30%, any quantity, net 30 days, plus shipping (disregard retail shipping charges).



FADE TO BLACK

There are double images, ghosts on your tv screen. Look closely. You may recognize them.

by A. M. RONNING



Sometimes, inadvertently, I still look for Alistair. He used to appear in shows the way that Hitchcock drifted in and out of his own movies. No one else noticed, but I did because he was my friend.

A few years ago I worked as an engineer at a small television station in Bangor, Maine. It was my job to run the shows—films, videotapes, commercials—for ten hours a day. People kidded me about my cushy job, but it wasn't that easy. There's a lot of crap on tv, and it's bearable only when you know you can flip off the set and walk away from it. I couldn't. Perhaps that's why he chose me. He knew I'd be a captive audience.

A Monday night in Master Control: I sat facing the rows of monitors, smoking, sipping a beer, feet on the console, watching Johnny Carson on the *Tonight Show*. At the sound of the back doorbell, I hid my beer and went to answer it. Everyone left after the news and the building's emptiness, held at bay by Johnny's audio, now grew palpable. Aware of being alone, I peered out the tiny window and saw a short, hunched-over figure. The collar of the shabby overcoat was turned up against the snow, and a battered cowboy hat was pulled low over the face ... a cross between Jed Clampett and Columbo. He shifted from foot to foot, blowing on his hands. As I cracked the door, snow swirled in and the wind whipped my words out to the starry night sky. "Hello there. Can I help you?"

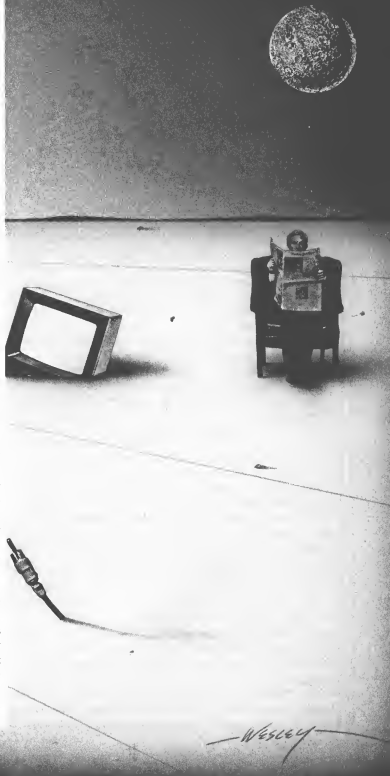
The hat came up slowly. His eyes were vague-blue and had that opaque, glassy look that comes with age in dogs and men. He was at least seventy or more, maybe ageless; I couldn't tell. He smiled like a man waking from deep sleep while his breath made white smoke-rings in the air. His face was blank, lined and waxy, no life etched in its surface, its only unique feature a strange, almost star-shaped purple scar on the right temple. "I've always wanted to see how a tv station works," he said. "I know it's late, but I'm a night owl."

Yes, an owl: eyes all-knowing; face round, inscrutable, and patient. I thought he might rotate his head halfway around with no discernible effort. "I wouldn't want to put you to any trouble," he continued, "but I'm very curious."

Damn nuisance. "Couldn't you come back during business hours? Someone will show you around."

"Yes, yes," he muttered, "I shouldn't have bothered you. So sorry, just thought I'd give it a try." He stamped his feet again, blew on his hands and shoved them into his pockets. The chill, now part of my clothes, penetrated my bones. I didn't like keeping him there on the doorstep, but he made no move to leave.

"I'm sorry. I'd break the rule for you, but I'm rather busy ..."



Wesley

FADE TO BLACK

"Now, now, don't worry. I'll just run along." He swept his hand from his pocket and doffed the cowboy hat. His sparse blue-white hair was combed back and a film of snowflakes coated his scalp. The gesture was endearing and familiar, so humble, so courtly, that it began to change my mind. As he turned away, I heard Johnny in the distance announcing a break. I had one minute before I had to insert my local spots.

"Wait a minute. Don't you have a car?"

"No, no car. Cataracts. They took away my license. I'd drive without one, but I've never done anything illegal in my life and it's too late to start. I always walk."

"Well, look, it's freezing out here. At least come in and warm up. You can't stay long, but come in." I shoved open the door and he hustled in, surprisingly agile. I raced to the board in time to switch to local and drop in my film. As it ran, I turned to see him standing in the center of the room, calmly surveying his surroundings.

"They run a minute and we run a minute," I said.

He nodded, and when the film ended, I flipped back to network and Johnny.

"Have a seat," I offered. He eased himself into it and gazed at me from a face devoid of expression. Usually old faces betray the emotions that molded them, but his showed nothing—no history of pain or joy or sadness—just this waxy quality like a man dead, facial aberrations smoothed away by the skillful touch of the undertaker.

"Can I show you around? It'll have to be a quick tour."

"I'm only interested in this, actually. Tell me about these machines."

"These are the tape machines. We run shows and commercials on them. The controls are over here. I just ran this film. It has fifteen spots on it. They're on tape, too, but it's too much work to string them up. We have hardly any paid spots after midnight. See?" I showed him the program log and explained briefly its intricacies. "Any PSA will do, public service, so I use the film. Someday we'll have a TCR. That's a machine that can run up to twenty-two two-inch tapes in a row."

I continued to explain my job, feeling less awkward with this odd, plastic elf when I talked about what I knew. He took it in, hands stuffed in his pockets, asking minimal but accurate questions, nodding all the while.

"So this is where I've been," he said in wonder when I'd finished my spiel.

"You've been here before?"

"Not really, not quite this way."

Senile, I thought, and made no comment. He watched with intense concentration as I ran my next break.

"Thank you, friend," he said when I flipped back to Johnny. "I certainly appreciate your kind-

ness. And I'll tell you a secret." His eyes lost their haziness and glowed with revelation. "I'm in the tv sometimes. You look for me. Old people, they have nothing else. They live with tv; it passes their time. Look for me ... look for this."

He tapped the star-shaped, purple scar with a crooked finger, prodded the hat upward to emphasize his point. I smiled at him and let him out into the night, carefully locking the door behind him. What an odd man ... strange, eccentric, but nice. I hoped I'd made his night easier. Must've been an actor in his youth ... used to be a movie star. Dumping the beer I'd hidden, I fetched another from my cache in the ancient refrigerator, poured it into my cup and settled down to finish the night with Johnny, so I could go home.

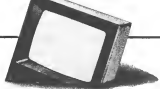
A week later in Master Control: I was watching *Little House on the Prairie* when I saw him. I caught a glimpse of him standing on the edge of a group of townspeople before the camera shifted to show Melissa Gilbert kicking up dust in a fight with a boy. The scar blazed out at me. I recognized the worn coat and hat. He'd been an extra in Hollywood! This show must've been made last spring, and he was here, in Maine, retired, of course. Or he'd taken a hard-earned, long-dreamed-of vacation to California, the gift of relatives or the savings of a lifetime, and been lucky enough to experience the thrill of being on a show. An eccentric millionaire? No, he'd had the sincere smell of poverty about him.

I'd seen him. If he dropped in again, I'd make a point of telling him.

Thursday was my night off, and I was at home (having turned down an invitation to a Broadway opening, cocktails with Truman Capote, and a date with a weasly punk named Roger who wanted to take me to *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*), reading while I watched *The Waltons*. He appeared, his usual shabby self, and blended in perfectly in the town scene in front of the general store. I saw the scar; it clicked in my brain as the camera panned by him. He'd been busy last spring. It was an amazing coincidence that the two shows he'd been on had aired three days apart.

There was nothing unusual in this (if it niggled at my subconscious, I ignored it) until the next Monday at work. I was running an old film, a black-and-white *Andy Griffith*, and there in Floyd Lawson's barbershop sat my old man. He held his hat in his hands and waited patiently as Andy, Goober, and Floyd discussed fishing at Myer's Lake. It was the same bland, waxy face I'd seen two weeks ago. Goose pimples skittered up my arms, my hands numb.

For the next two weeks I was obsessed with tv, seeking an explanation I couldn't find. My job afforded me the opportunity to indulge this preoccupation, but my personal life suffered. Friends couldn't get me to go out, and though I wanted to,



I couldn't tell them why. It sounded crazy. It was crazy. When I hadn't seen him for a week, I began to relax. After two, I doubted what I'd seen, and by the end of three, I laughed at my overactive imagination. Too much video, too much work ... it was an episode to be dismissed and forgotten.

The back doorbell at the station: he was there. I wasn't scared. He wasn't a figure to evoke fear, but I itched at the roots of my hair. He followed me in and sat next to me at the console. He held out his hand. "Alistair Clarke with an e."

"Andrea. Call me Andy."

"You've seen me then," he said.

"You've worked in television?"

"Oh, no. I thought you understood." He wheezed, a crackly elf's laugh. "You wouldn't look at me that way if you didn't understand. What shows have you seen me in?"

I told him and he nodded, removed his hat and pointed an arthritic finger at his scar. "You see that, don't you? You know it's me, my birthmark. I'm in them. It's easy. It just happens. Coming back, that's hard."

"Were you an actor?"

"Me? No, never. You don't want to see, do you? I do it for fun. It fills the time. I've never done anything with my life. Worked, had a wife, she's dead now, had some kids but they're gone. Never left my home town. Just a silly old man. No one to give me the time of day. Ugly old apartment ... not enough money. I don't want your sympathy, mind you. I'm just telling you why I do it. It's the only thing I've got."

"Are you done here soon?" he asked.

"About one-fifteen. Why?"

"I'll show you how I do it. Do you want to see?" His eyes gleamed and I was drawn. Whatever, I had to give him a ride home. I couldn't leave him out in that cold.

"See there," he said.

We were in his apartment. Cold seeped through cracked window moldings, circulating around the barren, dingy room. One lamp on a scarred end table cast menacing shadows on the peeling, faded wallpaper and a thread-bare over-stuffed armchair. The kitchenette was composed of a tiny formica table and an aluminum-legged chair with a split vinyl seat pad. Fifties junkyard rejects. Beside the studio bed in the corner, his meager wardrobe hung on wall hooks. It was neat. It spoke of age and loneliness.

The focus of the room was an old cabinet-style tv set in the corner in front of the armchair. It was hooked onto a cable but still had those old-fashioned rabbit ears on top. All the local stations were off the air, but he'd dialed up channel 38 out of Boston, which was airing an old Charlie Chan

movie. I wanted to leave ... but couldn't. He was so destitute, so alone. God knows I'd have to find a way to help him. Maybe I could take up a collection at the station.

I stood, shivering in my coat, and waited.

"Watch me now, watch me," he intoned. "I want you to know. It's like this, you see. One night I'm getting up to change the channel. We didn't have those boxes yet, and I'm standing there like this, bending over. And I'm wishing like the devil that I weren't here, wishing like a bastard (pardon me) that I was anywhere, and I did this."

He bent over the tv and began to dissolve. He faded out like the video used to fade up on old sets. He flickered in the grey reflected light and was gone. I gaped and sank into the armchair, watching. Charlie was in a room of suspects, a shot rang out, and when he left to search the ship the old man waited on deck, just a figure that the camera trailed over as it followed Chan and number one son.

My mind struggled to grasp what I'd seen and was in the process of denying it when Alistair emerged. He crawled backward out of the set, his five-foot-three frame hunched over, first a wavery outline, an insubstantial cloud of mist that fluttered and took form as he became more a part of the room and less a part of the video. Then he stood before me, bathed in grey, the skin more waxy, his humanity diminished, as though he hadn't regained his dimensions. He looked flat, a one sided image. As he stepped toward me, he rounded out at the edges, but there'd been a point when I couldn't separate him from the tv screen itself.

"You see?" he asked, gasping with exertion.

I jumped up and eased him into an armchair.

"Are you all right? Can you breathe?"

"It takes a bit. I'm fine." He sighed. "It takes more effort getting out than going in."

I staggered back, found the kitchen chair, and let my knees give way as I dropped into it. "How? Why? It didn't happen."

"Yes, it did." His head fell back, his eyes closed. "It gets harder these days."

"You shouldn't do this. Look at what it does to you. It saps your strength." What was I saying?

He chuckled. "Everything saps my strength these days. It's a question of which activity is more rewarding. If I were a rich old man maybe I'd have looked for a hungry young woman. As it is, you live with tv. You must understand that it's a better world in there for me than the one out here."

"What if it kills you?"

"Time will kill me just as effectively and with much less pleasure. I live in there. For a short time I'm young and alive. I remember what it felt like to have muscles that didn't constantly ache. There's no time in there. Just a revolving continuum of shows, a way to keep busy. It's worst when there's

(continued on page 100)

**I DON'T
KNOW
WHY
SHE
SWALLOWED
THE FLY**

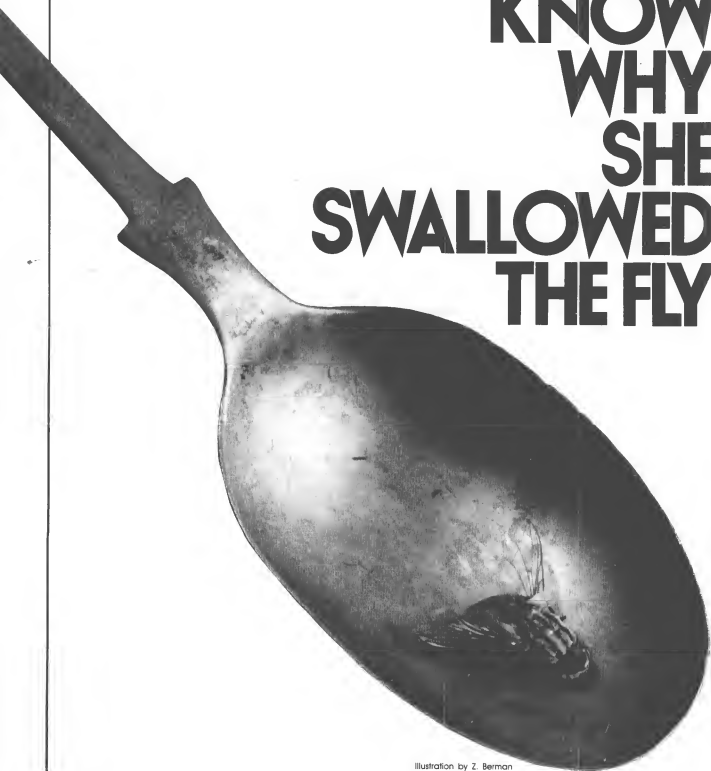


Illustration by Z. Berman

Some parents have exotic tastes. Others go for Wonder Bread and jam. But a few find the pleasures of the table in more curious cuisine.

by JON COHEN

From his hiding place beneath the kitchen table Edgar saw his mother pluck a fly off the countertop and hold it by its wing, turning it this way and that. It had been buzzing around the kitchen while he secretly watched her cook chocolate pudding, landing on pots and pans, the window, a knife. Edgar knew the fly would not live long, that soon his mother would get her swatter and hunt it down. But this time she did not use the swatter—instead she reached out for the fly with a reptilian quickness that made Edgar shrink farther back into his secret place. He watched as she examined it, turning it by its wing, a cherry on a stem. Then she tilted her head back, opened her mouth, and dropped the fly in.

For a moment Edgar did not move. He thought he could hear the fly still buzzing inside his mother's mouth. When she went back to the chocolate pudding (which Edgar craved above all else) he scurried noiselessly out of the kitchen to find his little brother, Miles. Miles was in his playpen fingering a spot on the mattress set aglow by a slice of afternoon sunlight. He spent hours doing such things.

Edgar knelt down and poked at his brother through the wooden bars of the playpen.

"Miles."

Miles looked up with a drooly grin. Miles was Edgar's confidant, although he was too young to understand a word Edgar said. But he listened attentively anyway because he liked the tone and rhythm of Edgar's voice, and the way his lips moved.

"Hey, Miles. Mommy ate a fly."

Miles's response to this was to reach out with his tiny finger and poke his brother repeatedly on the nose.

"Hey stop, Miles. I'm not kidding, Mommy ate a fly."

Miles would not leave his nose alone so Edgar moved over to a corner of the rec-room to think. Pucho, the family dog, came and sat beside him. Why had his mother done such a thing? Was she that hungry? Did she think the fly was something good to eat, like a chocolate chip? It was very strange. And the more he thought about it, the stranger it became, until finally the idea of his mother eating a fly became so strange that he knew it could not possibly have happened. After a while

he went back to the pen and to the delight of Miles climbed in to play car race, their favorite game, until their father came home from work and it was time for supper.

Edgar sat in his seat at the table half listening to his mother and father, sticking his tongue out and bugging his eyes to make Miles laugh, feeding scraps to Pucho under the table—in other words, doing what he usually did at mealtime. As always he ate his food very quickly (with Pucho's help), but tonight it seemed he'd barely even started on his mashed potatoes before his mother and father began to help themselves to seconds of everything.

"So, Edgar," his father said in between mouthfuls, "what have you been up to today?"

His father always asked him this, and it made Edgar feel very important, as if the games he played and the things he did with Miles mattered. While they talked his mother cleared the table, wiped Miles's mouth, and went into the kitchen to get dessert.

They stopped talking when his mother appeared with the chocolate pudding.

"Oh, Edgar," his father said, "your number one favorite!"

Before he'd eaten two mouthfuls his parents were scraping the bottom of their bowls. He stared down at his own bowl. Something glimmered in the middle of his pudding. He lifted it out with his spoon for a closer look. The wing of a fly. Edgar looked up and saw that his mother was staring at him.

He pushed away from the table and whispered, "I'm not hungry."

"What's the matter, son?" his father said. "Not hungry for chocolate pudding?"

"No. May I be excused?"

His father paused, eyeing him and then the bowl of pudding.

"You feeling okay?"

"Yes, I'm okay," Edgar said.

"Well, I guess you can go then," said his father. "And take Miles with you and put him in his pen. And Edgar ..."

"Yes, Dad?"

"Why don't you pass your pudding over here and I'll finish it."

SHE SWALLOWED THE FLY

A week passed. Edgar sat on the floor of the rec-room playing with Miles and Pucho. Edgar was dressing Pucho in one of his T-shirts, and Pucho was being very patient. Upstairs his mother's sewing machine hummed away, and in the den his father sat reading the paper. Pucho became less cooperative, so Edgar looked for something else to do. He wanted to play with his model robot, but it was up on a shelf he could not reach. He went to get his father.

In the den his father was bending over the aquarium, his back to the door. Edgar paused. His father had rolled up his sleeve and was slowly lowering his hand into the bubbling water. Then he made a quick movement and brought his hand back out of the water. Something wriggled in his fingers. He tilted his head back, opened his mouth, and dropped it in.

Edgar backed out of the room.

"Miles!"

Miles was pulling on Pucho's ear, and the dog looked up beseechingly at Edgar.

"Miles, Daddy ate a goldfish! I saw it!"

He did not know what to think. His mother was eating flies, and his father was eating goldfish. Maybe they were running out of food, and soon they would all be on a steady diet of flies and goldfish. But there was enough food at mealtime. More than enough—it seemed to Edgar that his mother lived in the kitchen now, fixing more food than ten families could eat.

Every morning Edgar went to check the aquarium, and every morning there were fewer goldfish. Nine goldfish, eight, seven, six ... until at last there were no goldfish at all. And then the little water plants sprouting from the pink and white clam shells disappeared. And finally, one by one, the snails. His father never said a word. His mother did not find it strange that the aquarium was filled with empty bubbling water.

It was a Saturday and Edgar's father was home for lunch. While his mother stood rinsing dishes in the sink, Edgar's father held Miles in his lap feeding him. Edgar sat in his chair, nervously munching on a potato chip. His father spooned baby food into Miles. From time to time he would playfully slip a spoonful into his own mouth. Then he began to eat every other spoonful. In the end, with Miles looking up at him with helpless disappointment, he gulped down the rest of the baby food.

Edgar was staring at him when his father looked up.

"You caught me," he said, smiling in a way that made Edgar shift in his chair. "It's just that this stuff tastes so good, you know?"

He got up, opened another jar and began to feed Miles again. Edgar could tell by the little wrinkles around his father's eyes that he was trying

very hard not to take another bite of Miles's food.

Edgar lay in bed. Although it was very late, he was still awake. He listened to the night and worried. He thought about what had happened at school that afternoon. During lunchtime he had been sitting in the cafeteria with the other first graders. Teacher Mary handed out their lunch boxes. Edgar was the last to get his. He made himself wait a moment before he undid the latch on his box and looked in. His sandwiches and cookies were, as usual, double-wrapped in plastic, but they did not look right. He undid the plastic. Someone had taken bites out of his sandwich and had nibbled on his cookies, too. He shut his lunch box and sat very still until it was time to go back to the classroom.

In bed, his eyes closed, Edgar saw a huge lunch box filled with a truckload of sandwiches and cookies, all with teeth marks in them. He got up and stood by the night-light beside his door and listened to his mother and father talking in the kitchen. At first he could make out a word here and there, but then their voices became garbled and indistinct. As he listened, the sound of their voices disappeared altogether. What he heard were mumbles, slurs, grunts, and chewing noises—the sounds of a terrible hunger being satisfied.

Morning. Edgar put some dry dog food in Pucho's bowl. Usually, the food hitting the bowl brought Pucho running, but not this time. Edgar searched in all the usual places for her, but she was not under the front porch steps or hiding in her favorite spot behind the garage. His mother helped him look until it was time for school. After school he ran home. She told him she had looked everywhere and had called the pound three times. When his father came home, they drove the streets until dark.

"Edgar," his father said when it was too dark to see anymore, "we've looked enough for tonight, son. But don't you worry, she'll be back in the morning." He reached out to pat Edgar's knee, but Edgar pulled away.

"No, she won't," he said.

When they got home Edgar went to the closet to put his coat away. Then he went to the kitchen for one last look at Pucho's bowl. It was still full. He picked up her water dish to fill it with fresh water in case she came back in the night. He stood on a stool and ran the faucet a minute to get cold water, watching the stream disappear into the garbage disposal. Something in the disposal glinted in the light. He reached his hand down into it and slowly pulled out the remains of Pucho's collar. There was a tiny brown clot on the tag. Edgar made a shrill squeaking sound, dropped the collar back in before his parents saw him, and ran into the rec-room to find his brother. Then he got down on his knees and whispered through the playpen bars.



"Miles! They ate Pucho. Mommy and Daddy ate Pucho!"

Miles laughed because, of course, he had no idea what Edgar was saying and figured he'd just come to play. Edgar was bugging his eyes, so Miles bugged his back at him and cooed and grinned.

"No, Miles," Edgar whispered. "They ate Pucho. They're eating *everything*!"

A shadow appeared beside the playpen, and Edgar looked up to see his father looming above. "Time for little boys to be in bed," he said. He reached over and scooped Miles up and cradled him in his arms. Edgar stepped back and watched, his heart beating very fast. His father held Miles close, pushing his nose in the little boy's neck. Edgar could hear his father sniffing and sniffing, as if it were a loaf of fresh bread he held, or a pot roast.

No, Edgar thought.

He stayed with his father and Miles every step of the way, until his father tucked the little boy in and turned out the light behind him. Throughout the night Edgar got up out of bed to stand outside

Edgar imagined the water streaming into the garbage disposal, sloshing through Miles's tiny white bones.

the open door of Miles's room. In the moment it took for his eyes to adjust to the dark, Edgar would panic, fearing Miles was gone. But then he'd see him, and hear him sighing and laughing in his sleep. Once, when he got up, his mother and father were standing at Miles's door whispering. They looked up suddenly when Edgar appeared.

"What's the matter, son?" his father said. "Can't sleep?"

"You're worried about Pucho, aren't you?" his mother said.

"Don't worry," they said almost in unison. "She'll come back tomorrow."

His mother led him back to his room. "Would you like me to get you a little snack or something?" she asked.

"No," said Edgar.

He got up again later when he was sure they were no longer in the hallway. He looked in Miles's room. Miles was asleep. Finally, just before dawn, Edgar drifted off, dreaming of flies and goldfish.

In the morning, Miles was gone. Edgar had slept late. The first thing he did when he got up was check his brother's room, and when he wasn't there he went to look for him in his playpen. It was empty. Edgar ran into the kitchen where his

mother sat eating a tremendous bowl of Cheerios.

"Where's Miles?"

His mother looked up at him. "Don't shout, Edgar. What's the matter with you?"

"Where is he?"

"Your father took him to the doctor's. It's time for his measles shot. They'll be back soon."

Edgar felt himself shake. His back was sweaty. They ate him, he thought.

His mother got up to rinse her bowl in the sink. Edgar imagined the water streaming into the garbage disposal, sloshing through Miles's tiny white bones.

"Now, what can I get you for breakfast?" his mother asked, her back turned. Edgar slipped out of the kitchen and ran upstairs to his parents' bedroom. The emergency numbers were taped on the side of the phone. Fire and Police—two words he knew how to spell. It took him a long time to get the numbers right and to dial the phone, but he knew how to do it because his father always let him dial when they called Grandma. When a policeman answered, he knew what to say, too, because he'd seen it a lot on tv.

"This is Edgar," he said. "I live on Amherst Avenue. Mommy and Daddy ate Pucho, and now they've eaten Miles. Please come quick." And then he hung up.

He had been so intent on using the phone that he did not hear the car door slam, or his parents' talking. But now he heard them coming up the stairs. He ran to lock the door, but his father had already begun to open it. Edgar backed away and watched as the door slowly opened.

"Edgar?" His father stepped into the bedroom. Edgar sat hunched and trembling on the center of the bed. He listened for the wail of a police siren.

And then his mother came into the room. In her arms she held a giggling and drooling Miles.

"Miles!" Edgar jumped up. They had not eaten him. And then he thought, Maybe Pucho will come home, too.

He started to run toward his brother when suddenly his father reached out and caught him around the waist, pulled him backward, and sat him down on his big lap. His mother closed the door behind her and put Miles carefully on the rug. His father began to talk and sometimes Edgar would answer, and sometimes his mother would. After a while he became quiet and just listened to the two of them. His father's arms were wrapped closely around him. Edgar could feel him breathing on the back of his neck, and could hear him sniffing and sniffing. He did not know when the change came, but now the sound of his parents' voices had become low, rushed, and indistinct, like the hungry sounds Edgar himself made when he was about to devour something good, like chocolate pudding. ■

Why the Stranger Dreams

by RANDALL SILVIS

When he thought about her, she felt herself get smaller. Smaller.

"Someone is thinking of me," she said. I rolled over in bed and, opening my eyes to look at her, struggled to come awake all at once because of the urgency of her voice. She was sitting up against the headboard, her knees drawn up tightly against her small naked breasts, shoulders hunched forward as her arms held her legs, a strand of long brown hair falling across her as she, her head resting upon her left knee, peered at me through those brown, brown, almost onyx-black eyes of hers.

"Someone...?" I said, and pushed myself up on one elbow.

"Thinking of me," she said, her voice small, frightened, plaintive.

I sat up and looked past her out her window. It was not dawn, though the mist had lightened to grey and the distant black shadow of the horizon was gilded with a trace of red. I pulled the cover up and tucked it around her neck and hoped that this would ease her shivering. In the fireplace there were only ashes, the remnants of a half-charred log.

"Do you want a fire?" I asked.

She shook her head no. "You've got to stop him before nightfall," she said. "You've got to make him stop."

I climbed out of bed and, without dressing, went to the door and opened it. The grey mist rushed into the room and spread over me as I stood at the threshold into the room, chilling me, bringing me awake. I remained there for several minutes, my back to her, until finally I saw the sun's corona, crimson as new blood, splitting open the shadowy dawn sky.

Then I came back into the room and stood by the chair beside the bed and began to dress. I saw

her, her head lifted now so that her chin rested upon her knee, staring at the open doorway. I went back and closed the door and then returned to stand beside her.

"Do you know who it is?" I asked.

She looked up briefly, then laid the side of her head against her knee again, allowing her hair to once more fall across her face, concealing the deep brown glaze of her eyes. "A stranger," she said. "He's dreaming of me."

"But if he's dreaming," I said, "in an hour or two he'll awaken. Then it will stop."

Very slowly she rolled her head from left to right and back again, telling me no. She laid her forehead square upon both knees, her face turned downward as though to gaze upon her small triangular mound of dark pubic hair, except that the blanket lay stretched across her lap and all she saw were the weave of the cloth and the tufts of yarn that were pulling loose from the fabric.

"When he awakens, he'll remember the dream and continue thinking of me throughout the day," she said. "And if he is allowed to dream of me again tonight he will have me, he'll draw me in. I'm not strong enough to fight him a second night."

"You've been awake all night?" I asked.

She nodded. "I thought I could fight him off alone. But he's winning. I feel myself getting smaller."

She looked up at me again and, lifting the blanket away from her, revealing her naked shoulders and back, her naked thighs and knees and calves and naked feet, said, "Look at me and tell me how much smaller I've become."

To my eyes she had not gotten any smaller. She had always been small, small enough for me to



Dreams

lift and hold against me, small enough to encircle my waist with her legs and settle down atop me, joining us, and light enough that, holding her so, her small breasts pressed to my ribs, I could stand comfortably by the window and rock gently back and forth as night fell while her fingertips traced the vertebrae of my spine.

I moved close to her. Embracing her from behind, I cupped her breasts in my hands. I kissed the back of her neck and then the tip of her shoulder. "You don't look any different to me," I told her. "You're beautiful, as you've always been beautiful."

"That's why the stranger dreams of me," she said. "That's why he wants to draw me in. He wants my beauty. His thoughts are swallowing me."

I released her, and drew the blanket around her once again. Sitting in the chair beside the bed I reached for my shoes, pulled them on and tied the laces. "Tell me where you were yesterday," I said. "And the day before. If a stranger saw you and you can tell me where, maybe I can find him there again today. Think where you might have been seen by him."

She was silent for a while and then looked up at me. A strand of hair clung to her cheek in the dampness of a tear. "I can't remember where it might have been," she said. "My mind isn't clear. It's in a kind of fog. I'm exhausted from fighting his thoughts all through the night."

I sat there in the chair by the window and looked at her and did not know what to do. I would do what she asked of me, anything she asked, whether I understood it or not, but I could not do a thing for her until she gave me more direction than this. I sat with both feet flat on the floor and my hands clasped over my knees and wished that I could go back to bed yet ready to do anything she asked of me.

"Burn some camphor," she finally said. "Maybe the scent will help to clear my thoughts."

I broke a small piece of camphor off the larger stick and placed it in the brass burner and set it smoldering. The narrow wisp of grey-white smoke spiraled up toward the ceiling and, caught in the draft, dissipated and spread throughout the room. She lifted her head and inhaled deeply through her nostrils, breathing out again through slightly parted lips. I put some coffee on to boil and stood by the window looking out. A large mushroom-shaped fungus had grown up in the yard overnight, its top concave and wide-brimmed, a shimmering collection of dew still floating in its center, the trunk thick and fibrous and the entire plant a very pale yellow with splotches of burnt umber marking the fluted top. Sometimes when such mushrooms grew, in the yard or in the outlying woods and fields, she, who had a knowledge of their powers, would gather them, later separating them into two piles, one pile to be sliced and boiled in soups, the other, smaller

pile to be chewed raw, she and I sitting together in bed and feeling their delicious poisons burn through us with fiery sensations until, long hours later, we were sated.

But now from the bed I heard a movement. Looking back I saw that she was finally relaxing, stretching out, her head thrown back against the headboard, eyes closed, hands dropped to her sides and her legs pushed out flat across the mattress. The blanket had fallen away from her upper body and now lay across her thighs. The nipples of her small breasts were hard, erect; I crossed the room and sat upon the edge of the bed and leaned toward her and took one of her breasts into my mouth. She laid her hand on the back of my head and lightly stroked my hair.

"The camphor's helping," she said. "I'm beginning to remember a little."

I allowed my hand to ride down the inward-curving slope of her belly and to slide beneath the blanket. I pushed the blanket aside.

She held my head with both hands and, though spreading her legs slightly, said, "Wait. Let me tell you what I remember," and exerted gentle pressure to lift my head away from her.



Sitting up again, I slid my hand beneath her right leg and felt the warmth there in the soft underflesh behind her knee. "Tell me," I said.

"Two days ago," she began, "I walked into the market, to the open-air market in the square. I was buying leeks; yes, two bunches of leeks and some hard bread and a basket of fruit. You remember, you met me afterward at the edge of town, and you carried the fruit as we walked home together."

"I remember," I said. "I had tea on the terrace of the café that faces the square. Did I tell you that?"

"Yes. It was after you had finished shopping. You were passing the time until the hour we had agreed to meet."

"Yes, I did tell you, didn't I? And did I mention the man?"

"No."

"He was there, the man who dreams of me. I remember him now. I remember him quite clearly. He was a dark man, like you, with dark hair and a ruddy complexion. He was very handsome, almost painfully so. I remember thinking that his features were so delicate, so finely chiseled, that

had he been a woman men would have killed one another for him."

"You spoke with him?" I asked.

"No. I never said a word to him. I saw him walking across the square, stopping at various booths. He wasn't really interested in buying anything. He was just passing time. Then as he was walking around the outside of the square he looked up at me there at my table, the one nearest the iron railing. He simply came to a stop and stood there looking up at me. I couldn't believe how handsome, how beautiful he was. It was an unreal kind of beauty, almost as though he wore a mask of some kind."

"But you didn't speak to him?"

"No. He stared at me a long time. Finally it made me too uncomfortable and I looked away from him. He turned around and started walking back toward the center of the square. I was relieved to see him going because the way he had looked at me had made my chest ache, had left it feeling both hollow and burning."

"And that was the last you saw of him?"

She shook her head. "He went only as far as the flower vendor. He bought a single flower, wrapped in white paper, and returned to lay it on my table. Then he said to me, as though I were a common prostitute he could buy with a flower, 'I have a room near here, at the Viking Arms. Come there with me.'"

"And you...?"

"I got up and went inside the café and sat in a dark corner alone for fifteen minutes. I was afraid that he might come inside looking for me, but he didn't. And then finally it was time to meet you, as we had arranged. Thank God he was gone by then. I went outside and came to you."

"So he really isn't a stranger at all," I said.

"Yes, he's a stranger! I know nothing about him. I didn't even speak to him."

"And now he dreams of you."

"And thinks of me every day. His thoughts keep pulling on me, claiming more and more of me as he draws me inside. If you don't stop him soon, he'll have me."

Saying this she drew her knees up again and buried her face against them. Leaning close to her, I took her hair into my hands, pressed it to my mouth and kissed it.

"What kind of flower did he give you?" I asked.

"I don't know," she said. "I never touched it. I left it lying on the table beside my cup of tea."

I felt a great emptiness infecting me, I felt myself becoming hollow, a shell, brittle, and weak. I encircled her with my arms and leaned against her with my face to her back I could feel the hard curve of her spine like knuckles pressed into my cheek.

After a moment she reached to the side and patted my leg. "Tend to your coffee," she said. "It's boiling over."

I no longer wanted any coffee, but I removed it from the heat and then mechanically poured myself a cup, and standing facing her, sipped from it as I tried to think of what next to do.

"Do you want any breakfast before I leave?"

"No," she said. "Just save me a little coffee. That's all I need."

Perhaps she was getting smaller. Though only across the room, she seemed distant, unreachable.

"Why didn't you tell me about him?" I asked. "I could have gone back looking for him that very day."

"I should have," she said. "But I was trying to fight off his thoughts alone. I didn't know he would be so strong. Strength and beauty do not usually go hand in hand."

"But you are both strong and beautiful," I said.

She shook her head. "I'm learning," she said, "that I am not as strong as I had thought myself to be."

The coffee, which I had inadvertently allowed to burn, left a taste in my mouth of charred wood. I went again to the door and, pulling it open, stood with my back to her.

"He's awake now," she said. "He's no longer dreaming. And unlike most men his waking thoughts have more power than his dreams."

"I'll find him for you," I said, though I did not move.

"You know what you have to do to stop him?"

"Yes," I said. I had already taken down one of the longer knives and slipped it under my belt, covering the handle with my shirt, though I do not think that she had seen me do it.

"I'm getting smaller every moment he's allowed to think of me," she said.

I turned and looked at her once more. She seemed very far away from me. I wanted to cry out to her, to shout a plea of some kind. But I said nothing. It would be better to use the knife. Before I turned and went out the door I told her, "There's a large new mushroom growing outside. Maybe tonight, if it's the right kind..."

She asked me to describe it to her. After I had done so she said, "It might be poisonous. I'll have to take a look at it. It could kill us. But we'll see. After you've stopped him."

I nodded and then turned and left, closing the door behind me.

The grass of the fields was still damp, and before long my trousers were wet to the knees. I could smell the sweet earth in the steam that rose up from the ground, and with this scent I filled the hollowness inside me. I tried not to think of what I would do. I would do it because it was what she wanted, what she had asked, but I would not think

Dreams

of it, and in that way the act itself would be hers and not mine. I would be no more to blame than the knife I would use.

By the time I reached the road I had another hour of walking ahead. The sun grew very warm and, were it not that I felt compelled to conceal the knife at all times, I would have removed my shirt. As it was I merely unbuttoned it to the waist and pushed up the sleeves. But even this did not cool me. The perspiration ran from my hair, down my temples; it beaded on my chest and trickled from my armpits. I felt it coursing down my back in droplets, and it felt like the lightest of fingertips.

By the time I reached the outskirts of town my trousers were dry. I did not know the exact location of the Viking Arms, so I went first to the public square. Because it was not a market day the square was relatively empty, a few wandering tourists with cameras slung on leather straps around their necks, pigeons pecking at the cobblestones, shards of paper tumbling in the breeze like blind crippled spirits stumbling from one corner of limbo to the other.

At the café where she had two days ago had a cup of tea, a waiter was preparing the tables on the terrace, wiping away the dampness of the morning with a white cloth. I stood below him in the square and asked if he could direct me to the Viking Arms.

"If you're looking for a room for the night," he said, "there are some much better ones nearby than the Viking Arms. And for only a few pennies more. Unless, of course, you have your mind set on going to the Viking Arms."

"You don't recommend that hotel?" I asked.

He studied me for a moment and then shrugged. "The Viking Arms is the kind of place," he said, "where most people rent a room just for the afternoon. But then, if that's what you're interested in..."

"No," I said. "I'm trying to find someone. He's staying at the Viking Arms."

"Oh," the waiter said. "In that case go down that street, the one with the statue of the boy in front of it. Go three blocks and then turn left. One more block and it's on the left side of the street."

I thanked him; he nodded slightly and then returned to wiping off the tables.

It took me less than ten minutes to find the hotel. The desk clerk, after he had listened to my description of the man I sought, said that he could not remember such a person. He echoed what the waiter had told me, that at this hotel many people check in and then out again on the same afternoon, that all rooms were paid for in advance, and that if I was interested he would be happy to quote me the hourly rate or the overnight rate. In any case, there was no one now registered at the hotel who fit the description of my man. He then offered to

make a room ready for me; he would even arrange, he said, for a small additional charge, to have someone there to greet me.

I thanked him but declined the offer and returned to the café on the square. There I went inside and ordered a *café crème* to get the taste of charred wood out of my mouth. Carrying the cup and saucer, I went out to sit on the terrace, at the table nearest the wrought-iron railing. When the waiter came by, I asked him if by any chance he had been on duty two days ago, at about three in the afternoon.

"Yes, of course," he said. "That was a market day, wasn't it? I work every market day; it's our busiest day of the week."

"Do you happen to remember a woman who was here at that time?" I asked. "She was sitting here at this table, drinking a cup of tea. A very beautiful woman, with long brown hair and deep, deep brown eyes."

He thought for a moment and then began to nod. "A small woman," he said. "Small and so beautiful that one could not help staring at her."

"Yes," I said.

"Those eyes of hers," he said. "Just looking into them was enough to break my heart."

"Yes," I said, smiling, also remembering.

"Of course," the waiter said. "But she wasn't here at three, it was an hour, maybe an hour and a half earlier than that. And she didn't have tea, but brandy."

"Brandy?" I said. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, a *fine à l'eau*. I served her myself. I remember because of those eyes she had. So dark and brilliant, they seemed almost like polished stones of some kind, like the kind of stone that is used in making rings for men."

"Onyx," I said.

"Yes," he answered. "She had eyes like polished onyx stones, and she was so small and beautiful sitting there, had I been a younger man..."

"Yes," I said, seeing her in my mind as she sat against the headboard of our bed, long brown hair framing her face, eyes of black stone, naked breasts and shoulders and thighs and calves, naked feet and hands and the feel of her body pressed to mine, the warmth and softness of her flesh, the strength of her muscles holding me, the scent of her hair.

"Yes," the waiter said. "I remember her. Are you looking for her? She wasn't back yesterday, but maybe she'll come on the next market day."

"I'm looking for a man," I told him. "A man who came here and spoke to her. He stood there, outside the railing, and spoke to her. Then he went across the square to the flower vendor and brought back a flower wrapped in white paper to lay upon her table. This table. He was a dark-haired man with a ruddy complexion."

"Oh," the waiter said. "You're looking for the

gentleman who was here with the lady."

"He wasn't with her," I said. "He only spoke to her briefly."

"Excuse me, sir," the waiter said. "But they were together. After presenting her with the flower, he joined her here at this very table. I served them myself. They drank brandies and even held hands across the table. And after a while they got up and left together, the lady clutching the yellow rose he had given her. When they walked off across the square together, I stood here watching them go. I remember thinking to myself what a beautiful couple they were."

I stared down at the tabletop, my fists clenched in my lap. I could feel the cool blade of the knife as it lay against my hip. The waiter stood there, patient, but I could not speak. He sensed, I think, that something was wrong. He took a step away from me.

"Wait," I said, and forced myself to look up at him. "Do you know where they went together? Do you know where this man lives?"

"No," he said, taking another step backward. "No, sir. I'm sorry." He bowed slightly and then turned and went back inside the café.

For a long time I sat there staring into my *café*

"He's no longer dreaming. And unlike most men, his waking thoughts have more power than his dreams."

crème, the coffee cold, and did not even lift the cup to my lips. Finally, I withdrew some change from my pocket and laid it on the table. I climbed over the metal railing and dropped down onto the cobblestones of the square, the tip of the knife blade biting into my flesh as I did so, and then walked slowly across the empty square without knowing where I was going.

At the opposite end of the square stood the bell tower, and because I felt the need to get very far away from the confinement of the square, above the tall buildings that closed me in and loomed over me on all sides, I climbed the stairs up to the top of the bell tower and stood there beneath the open cupola with my hands gripping the wooden railing as I looked far across the empty square to the café and the terrace and the table over which they had sipped brandies and held one another's hands.

Behind me there was a row of six wooden chairs, positioned so that the tourists who climbed the bell tower could rest and catch their breath and gaze out upon the scene below. Moving backward, I stumbled against one of these chairs. Its very presence there infuriated me. Seizing it with both

hands, I swung it up and smashed it against the frame of the cupola, the wood splintering and falling apart in my hands.

Then I seized the second chair and began smashing it against the huge bell. My movements became methodical, rhythmic: clash of the wood, dull reverberation of the bell, swing of the clapper, my body pivoting and straining, hands gripping, heart straining to burst, the clash of wood, the dull metal hollow aching reverberation of the bell . . .

Sometime before I had finished with the six wooden chairs, two policemen came thundering up the bell tower steps, one grabbing my right arm and the other my left arm, twisting my arms painfully behind my back. Then they slapped handcuffs on me and pushed me ahead of them down the bell-tower stairs. At the police station, they asked me what had caused my rampage and I told them, quite calm now, that my wife had been unfaithful. The officer questioning me nodded, as though he understood very well. But because I was carrying a knife, I was placed in a cell and kept there for two days. Finally, I turned over all of the money I had on me as payment for the chairs, and before I was released I agreed that the police could dispose of the knife however they wished.

The officer who had originally questioned me came up to say goodbye. He laid his hand upon my shoulder and said, "Believe me, I know what it's like. But you'll get over it, I know that, too. The thing is, now you won't feel so bad about having your own bit of fun. And that's the way to do it, I'm telling you. After all, she's just a woman, isn't she? And the world is full of women."

I walked out of the town and down the road and through the outlying forest and fields and finally to the house. The house, of course, was empty. The blanket from the bed lay like a discarded dress upon the floor. I picked it up and pressed it to my face. Her scent was still on the blanket; I inhaled deeply, drawing her fragrance in.

Later, just as night was falling, I went outside and looked for the mushroom and, finding it still there, plucked it free and carried it into the house. I sat on the bed, my back against the headboard, and nibbled at the fungus's fluted edges, the soft golden flesh. The taste was at the same time earthy and bitter, warming my throat, smoldering like an ember in my stomach. I ate the mushroom, the cap and stem, and held the blanket to my face and inhaled her scent and saw her vividly in my mind. I held her image there and would not let it go. I felt her struggling to free herself from my thoughts, but I would not release her. I licked the last bits of the mushroom's tender skin from my fingers and then lay down on the bed and pulled the blanket over my face.

And now, without sleep, I dream of her. She grows inside me. Her eyes are black and angry stones.

PALADIN OF THE

This was an old man. Not an incredibly old man; obsolete, spavined; not as worn as the sway-backed stone steps ascending the Pyramid of the Sun to an ancient temple; not yet a relic. But even so, a very old man, this old man perched on an antique shooting stick, its handles open to form a seat, its spike thrust at an angle into the soft ground and trimmed grass of the cemetery. Gray, thin rain misted down at almost the same angle as that at which the spike pierced the ground. The winter-barren trees lay flat and black against an aluminum sky, unmoving in the chill wind. An old man sitting at the foot of a grave mound whose headstone had tilted slightly when the earth had settled; sitting in the rain and speaking to someone below.

"They tore it down, Minna.

"I tell you, they must have bought off a councilman.

"Came in with bulldozers at six o'clock in the morning, and you know that's not legal. There's a Municipal Code. Supposed to hold off till at least seven on weekdays, eight on the weekend; but there they were at six, even before six, barely light for godsakes. Thought they'd sneak in and do it before the neighborhood got wind of it and called the landmarks committee. Sneaks: they come on holidays, can you imagine!

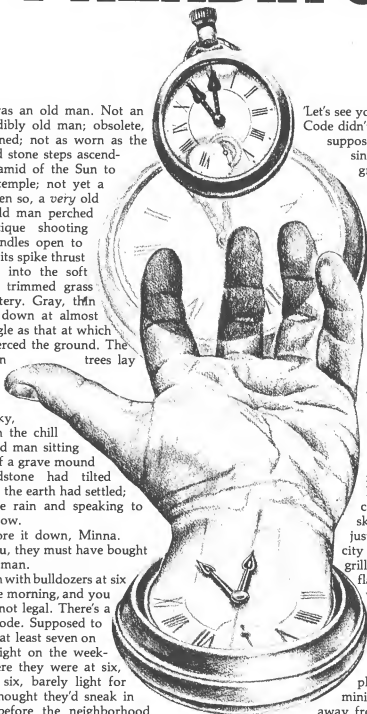
"But I was out there waiting for them, and I told them, 'You can't do it, that's Code number 91.3002, sub-section E,' and they lied and said they had special permission, so I said to the big muckymuck in charge,

'Let's see your waiver permit,' and he said the Code didn't apply in this case because it was supposed to be only for grading, and since they were demolishing and not grading, they could start whenever they felt like it. So I told him I'd call the police, then, because it came under the heading of Disturbing the Peace, and he said ... well, I know you hate that kind of language, old girl, so I won't tell you what he said, but you can imagine.

"So I called the police, and gave them my name, and of course they didn't get there till almost quarter after seven (which is what makes me think they bought off a councilman), and by then those 'dozers had leveled most of it. Doesn't take long, you know that.

"And I don't suppose it's as great a loss as, maybe, say, the Great Library of Alexandria, but it was the last of the authentic Deco design drive-ins, and the carhops still served you on roller skates, and it was a landmark, and just about the only place left in the city where you could still get a decent grilled cheese sandwich pressed very flat on the grill by one of those weights they used to use, made with real cheese and not that rancid plastic they cut into squares and call it 'cheese food.'

"Gone, old dear, gone and mourned. And I understand they plan to put up another one of those mini-malls on the site, just ten blocks away from one that's already there, and you know what's going to happen: this new one will drain off the traffic from the older one, and then that one will fail the way they all do when the next one gets built, you'd think they'd see some history in it; but no, they never learn. And you should have seen the crowd by seven-thirty. All ages, even some of those kids painted like aborigines, with



LOST HOUR

by HARLAN ELLISON

*Gray, thin rain misted down; barren trees lay flat on an aluminum sky.
The old man at the foot of the grave spoke into the earth.*

torn leather clothing. Even they came to protest. Terrible language, but at least they were concerned. And nothing could stop it. They just whammed it, and down it went.

"I do so miss you today, Minna. No more good grilled cheese." Said the very old man to the ground. And now he was crying softly, and now the wind rose, and the mist rain stippled his overcoat.

Nearby, yet at a distance, Billy Kinetta stared down at another grave. He could see the old man over there off to his left, but he took no further notice. The wind whipped the vent of his trenchcoat. His collar was up but rain trickled down his neck. This was a younger man, not yet thirty-five. Unlike the old man, Billy Kinetta neither cried nor spoke to memories of someone who had once listened. He might have been a geomancer, so silently did he stand, eyes toward the ground.

One of these men was black; the other was white.

Beyond the high, spiked-iron fence surrounding the cemetery two boys crouched, staring through the bars, through the rain; at the men absorbed by grave matters, by matters of graves. These were not really boys. They were legally young men. One was nineteen, the other two months beyond twenty. Both were legally old enough to vote, to drink alcoholic beverages, to drive a car. Neither would reach the age of Billy Kinetta.

One of them said, "Let's take the old man." The other responded, "You think the guy in the trenchcoat'll get in the way?"

The first one smiled; and a mean little laugh. "I sure as shit hope so." He wore, on his right hand, a leather carnyby glove with the fingers cut off, small round metal studs in a pattern along the line of his knuckles. He made a fist, flexed, did it again.

They went under the spike fence at a point where erosion had created a shallow gully. "Sonofabitch!" one of them said, as he slid through on his stomach. It was muddy. The front of his saateen roadie jacket was filthy. "Sonofabitch!" He was speaking in general of the fence, the sliding under, the muddy ground, the universe in total. And the old man, who would now *really* get the crap kicked out of him for making this fine saateen roadie jacket filthy.

They sneaked up on him from the left, as far from the young guy in the trenchcoat as they could. The first one kicked out the shooting stick with a short, sharp, downward movement he had learned in his Tae-Kwon Do class. It was called the *yup-chagi*. The old man went over backward.

Then they were on him, the one with the filthy sonofabitch saateen roadie jacket punching at the old man's neck and the side of his face as he dragged him around by the collar of the overcoat. The other one began ransacking the coat pockets, ripping the fabric to get his hand inside.

The old man commenced to scream. "Protect me! You've got to protect me ... it's necessary to protect me!"

The one pillaging pockets froze momentarily. What the hell kind of thing is that for this old fucker to be saying? Who the hell does he think'll protect him? Is he asking *us* to protect him? I'll protect you, scumbag! I'll kick in your fuckin' lung! "Shut 'im up!" he whispered urgently to his friend. "Stick a fist in his mouth!" Then his hand, wedged in an inside jacket pocket, closed over something. He tried to get his hand loose, but the jacket and coat and the old man's body had wound around his wrist. "C'mon loose, motherfuckah!" he said to the very old man, who was still screaming for protection. The other young man was making huffing sounds, as dark as mud, as he slapped at the rain-soaked hair of his victim. "I can't ... he's all twisted 'round ... getcher hand outta there so's I can ..." Screaming, the old man had doubled under, locking their hands on his person.

And then the pillager's fist came loose, and he was clutching—for an instant—a gorgeous pocket watch.

What used to be called a turnip watch.

The dial face was *cloisonné*, exquisite beyond the telling.

The case was of silver, so bright it seemed blue.

The hands, cast as arrows of time, were gold. They formed a shallow V at precisely eleven o'clock. This was happening at 3:45 in the afternoon, with rain and wind.

The timepiece made no sound, no sound at all.

Then: there was space all around the watch, and in that space in the palm of the hand, there was heat. Intense heat for just a moment, just long

enough for the hand to open.

The watch glided out of the boy's palm and levitated.

"Help me! You *must* protect me!"

Billy Kinetta heard the shrieking, but did not see the pocket watch floating in the air above the astonished young man. It was silver, and it was end-on toward him, and the rain was silver and slanting; and he did not see the watch hanging free in the air, even when the furious young man disentangled himself and leaped for it. Billy did not see the watch rise just so much, out of reach of the mugger.

Billy Kinetta saw two boys, two young men of ratpack age, beating someone much older; and he went for them. Pow, like that!

Thrashing his legs, the old man twisted around — over, under — as the boy holding him by the collar tried to land a punch to put him away. Who would have thought the old man to have had so much battle in him?

A flapping shape, screaming something unintelligible, hit the center of the group at full speed. The carnaby-gloved hand reaching for the watch grasped at empty air one moment, and the next was buried under its owner as the boy was struck a crackback block that threw him face-first into the soggy ground. He tried to rise, but something stomped him at the base of his spine; something kicked him twice in the kidneys; something rolled over him like a flash flood.

Twisting, twisting, the very old man put his thumb in the right eye of the boy clutching his collar.

The great trenchcoated maelstrom that was Billy Kinetta whirled into the boy as he let loose of the old man on the ground and, howling, slapped a palm against his stinging eye. Billy locked his fingers and delivered a roundhouse wallop that sent the boy reeling backward to fall over Minna's tilted headstone.

Billy's back was to the old man. He did not see the miraculous pocket watch smoothly descend through rain that did not touch it, to hover in front of the old man. He did not see the old man reach up, did not see the timepiece snuggle into an arthritic hand, did not see the old man return the turnip to an inside jacket pocket.

Wind, rain and Billy Kinetta pummeled two young men of a legal age that made them accountable for their actions. There was no thought of the knife stuck down in one boot, no chance to reach it, no moment when the wild thing let them rise. So they crawled. They scabbled across the muddy ground, the slippery grass, over graves and out of his reach. They ran; falling, rising, falling again; away, without looking back.

Billy Kinetta, breathing heavily, knees trembling, turned to help the old man to his feet; and found him standing, brushing dirt from his overcoat, snorting in anger and mumbling to himself.

"Are you all right?"

For a moment the old man's recitation of annoyance continued, then he snapped his chin down sharply as if marking end to the situation, and looked at his cavalry to the rescue. "That was very good, young fella. Considerable style you've got there."

Billy Kinetta stared at him wide-eyed. "Are you sure you're okay?" He reached over and flicked several blades of wet grass from the shoulder of the old man's overcoat.

"I'm fine. I'm fine but I'm wet and I'm cranky. Let's go somewhere and have a nice cup of Earl Grey."

There had been a look on Billy Kinetta's face as he stood with lowered eyes, staring at the grave he had come to visit. The emergency had removed that look. Now it returned.

"No, thanks. If you're okay, I've got to do some things."

The old man felt himself all over, meticulously, as he replied, "I'm only superficially bruised. Now if I were an old woman, instead of a spunky old man, same age though, I'd have lost considerable of the calcium in my bones, and those two would have done me some mischief. Did you know that women lose a considerable part of their calcium when they reach my age? I read a report." Then he paused, and said shyly, "Come on, why don't you and I sit and chew the fat over a nice cup of tea?"

Billy shook his head with bemusement, smiling despite himself. "You're something else, Dad. I don't even know you."

"I like that."

"What: that I don't know you?"

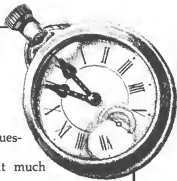
"No, that you called me 'Dad' and not 'Pop.' I hate Pop. Always makes me think the wise-apple wants to snap off my cap with a bottle opener. Now Dad has a ring of respect to it. I like that right down to the ground. Yes, I believe we should find someplace warm and quiet to sit and get to know each other. After all, you saved my life. And you know what that means in the Orient."

Billy was smiling continuously now. "In the first place, I doubt very much I saved your life. Your wallet, maybe. And in the second place, I don't even know your name; what would we have to talk about?"

"Gaspar," he said, extending his hand. "That's a first name. Gaspar. Know what it means?"

Billy shook his head.

"See, already we have something to talk about."



So Billy, still smiling, began walking Gaspar out of the cemetery. "Where do you live? I'll take you home."

They were on the street, approaching Billy Kinetta's 1979 Cutlass. "Where I live is too far for now. I'm beginning to feel a bit peaky. I'd like to lie down for a minute. We can just go on over to your place, if that doesn't bother you. For a few minutes. A cup of tea. Is that all right?"

He was standing beside the Cutlass, looking at Billy with an old man's expectant smile, waiting for him to unlock the door and hold it for him till he'd placed his still-calcium-rich but nonetheless old bones in the passenger seat. Billy stared at him, trying to figure out what was at risk if he unlocked that door. Then he snorted a tiny laugh, unlocked the door, held it for Gaspar as he seated himself, slammed it and went around to unlock the other side and get in. Gaspar reached across and thumbed up the door lock knob. And they drove off together in the rain.

Through all of this the timepiece made no sound, no sound at all.

Like Gaspar, Billy Kinetta was alone in the world.

His three-room apartment was the vacuum in which he existed. It was furnished, but if one stepped out into the hallway and, for all the money in all the unnumbered accounts in all the banks in Switzerland, one were asked to describe those furnishings, one would come away no richer than before. The apartment was charisma poor. It was a place to come when all other possibilities had been expended. Nothing green, nothing alive, existed in those boxes. No eyes looked back from the walls. Neither warmth nor chill marked those spaces. It was a place to wait.

Gaspar leaned his closed shooting stick, now a walking stick with handles, against the bookcase. He studied the titles of the paperbacks stacked haphazardly on the shelves.

From the kitchenette came the sound of water running into a metal pan. Then tin on cast iron. Then the hiss of gas and the flaring of a match as it was struck; and the pop of the gas being lit.

"Many years ago," Gaspar said, taking out a copy of Moravia's *The Adolescents* and thumbing it as he spoke, "I had a library of books, oh, thousands of books—never could bear to toss one out, not even the bad ones—and when folks would come to the house to visit they'd look around at all the nooks and crannies stuffed with books; and if they were the sort of folks who don't snuggle with books, they'd always ask the same dumb question." He waited a moment for a response and when none was forthcoming (the sound of china cups on sink

tile), he said, "Guess what the question was."

From the kitchen, without much interest: "No idea."

"They'd always ask it with the same kind of voice people use in the presence of large sculptures in museums. They'd ask me, 'Have you read all those books?'" He waited again, but Billy Kinetta was not playing the game. "Well, young fella, after a while the same dumb question gets asked a million times, you get sorta snappish about it. And it came to annoy me more than a little bit. Till I finally figured out the right answer.

"And you know what that answer was? Go ahead, take a guess."

Billy appeared in the kitchenette doorway. "I suppose you told them you'd read a lot of them but not all of them."

Gaspar waved the guess away with a flapping hand. "Now what good would that have done? They wouldn't know they'd asked a dumb question, but I didn't want to insult them, either. So when they'd ask if I'd read all those books, I'd say, 'Hell no. Who wants a library full of books you've already read?'"

Billy laughed despite himself. He scratched at his hair with idle pleasure, and shook his head at the old man's verve. "Gaspar, you are a wild old man. You retired?"

The old man walked carefully to the most comfortable chair in the room, an overstuffed Thirties-style lounge that had been reupholstered many times before Billy Kinetta had purchased it at the American Cancer Society Thrift Shop. He sank into it with a sigh. "No sir, I am not by any means retired. Still very active."

"Doing what, if I'm not prying?"

"Doing ombudsman."

"You mean, like a consumer advocate? Like Ralph Nader?"

"Exactly. I watch out for things. I listen, I pay some attention; and if I do it right, sometimes I can even make a little difference. Yes, like Mr. Nader. A very fine man."

"And you were at the cemetery to see a relative?"

Gaspar's face settled into an expression of loss. "My dear old girl. My wife, Minna. She's been gone, well, it was twenty years in January." He sat silently staring inward for a while, then: "She was everything to me. The nice part was that I knew how important we were to each other; we discussed, well, just everything. I miss that the most, telling her what's going on.

"I go to see her every other day.

"I used to go every day. But. It. Hurt. Too much."



PALADIN

They had tea. Gaspar sipped and said it was very nice, but had Billy ever tried Earl Grey? Billy said he didn't know what that was, and Gaspar said he would bring him a tin, that it was splendid. And they chatted. Finally, Gaspar asked, "And who were you visiting?"

Billy pressed his lips together. "Just a friend." And would say no more. Then he sighed and said, "Well, listen, I have to go to work."

"Oh? What do you do?"

The answer came slowly. As if Billy Kinetta wanted to be able to say that he was in computers, or owned his own business, or held a position of import. "I'm night manager at a 7-Eleven."

"I'll bet you meet some fascinating people coming in late for milk or one of those slushies," Gaspar said gently. He seemed to understand.

Billy smiled. He took the kindness as it was intended. "Yeah, the cream of high society. That is, when they're not threatening to shoot me through the head if I don't open the safe."

"Let me ask you a favor," Gaspar said. "I'd like a little sanctuary, if you think it's all right. Just a little rest. I could lie down on the sofa for a bit. Would that be all right? You trust me to stay here while you're gone, young fella?"

Billy hesitated only a moment. The very old man seemed okay, not a crazy, certainly not a thief. And what was there to steal? Some tea that wasn't even Earl Grey?

"Sure. That'll be okay. But I won't be coming back till two A.M. So just close the door behind you when you go; it'll lock automatically."

They shook hands, Billy shrugged into his still-wet trenchcoat, and he went to the door. He paused to look back at Gaspar sitting in the lengthening shadows as evening came on. "It was nice getting to know you, Gaspar."

"You can make that a mutual pleasure, Billy. You're a nice young fella."

And Billy went to work, alone as always.

When he came home at two, prepared to open a can of Hormel chili, he found the table set for dinner, with the scent of an elegant beef stew enriching the apartment. There were new potatoes and stir-fried carrots and zucchini that had been lightly battered to delicate crispness. And cupcakes. White cake with chocolate frosting. From a bakery.

And in that way, as gently as that, Gaspar insinuated himself into Billy Kinetta's apartment and his life.

As they sat with tea and cupcakes, Billy said, "You don't have anyplace to go, do you?"

The old man smiled and made one of those deprecating movements of the head. "Well, I'm not the

sort of fella who can bear to be homeless, but at the moment I'm what vaudevillians used to call 'at liberty.'"

"If you want to stay on a time, that would be okay," Billy said. "It's not very roomy here, but we seem to get on all right."

"That's strongly kind of you, Billy. Yes, I'd like to be your roommate for a while. Won't be too long, though. My doctor tells me I'm not long for this world." He paused, looked into the teacup and said softly, "I have to confess ... I'm a little frightened. To go. Having someone to talk to would be a great comfort."

And Billy said, without preparation, "I was visiting the grave of a man who was in my rifle company in Viet Nam. I go there sometimes." But there was such pain in his words that Gaspar did not press him for details.

So the hours passed, as they will with or without permission, and when Gaspar asked Billy if they could watch the television, to catch an early newscast, and Billy tuned in the old set just in time to pick up dire reports of another aborted disarmament talk, and Billy shook his head and observed that it wasn't only Gaspar who was frightened of something like death, Gaspar chuckled, patted Billy on the knee and said, with unassailable assurance, "Take my word for it, Billy ... it isn't going to happen. No nuclear holocaust. Trust me, when I tell you this: it'll never happen. Never, never, not ever."

Billy smiled wanly. "And why not? What makes you so sure ... got some special inside information?"

And Gaspar pulled out the magnificent timepiece, which Billy was seeing for the first time, and he said, "It's not going to happen because it's only eleven o'clock."

Billy stared at the watch, which read 11:00 precisely. He consulted his wristwatch. "Hate to tell you this, but your watch has stopped. It's almost five-thirty."

Gaspar smiled his own certain smile. "No, it's eleven."

And they made up the sofa for the very old man, who placed his pocket change and his fountain pen and the sumptuous turnip watch on the now-silent television set, and they went to sleep.

One day Billy went off while Gaspar was washing the lunch dishes, and when he came back, he had a large paper bag from Toys "R" Us.

Gaspar came out of the kitchenette rubbing a plate with a souvenir dish towel from Niagara Falls, New York. He stared at Billy and the bag. "What's in the bag?" Billy inclined his head, and indicated the very old man should join him in the middle of

the room. Then he sat down crosslegged on the floor, and dumped the contents of the bag. Gaspar stared with startlement, and sat down beside him.

So for two hours they played with tiny cars that turned into robots when the sections were unfolded.

Gaspar was excellent at figuring out all the permutations of the Transformers, Starriors and GoBots. He played well.

Then they went for a walk. "I'll treat you to a matinee," Gaspar said. "But no films with Karen Black, Sandy Dennis or Meryl Streep. They're always crying. Their noses are always red. I can't stand that."

They started to cross the avenue. Stopped at the light was this year's Cadillac Brougham, vanity license plates, ten coats of acrylic lacquer and two coats of clear (with a little retarder in the final "color coat" for a slow dry) of a magenta hue so rich that it approximated the shade of light shining through a decanter filled with Chateau Lafite-Rothschild 1945.

The man driving the Cadillac had no neck. His head sat thumped down hard on the shoulders. He stared straight ahead, took one last deep pull on the cigar, and threw it out the window. The still-smoking butt landed directly in front of Gaspar as he passed the car. The old man stopped, stared down at this coprolitic metaphor, and then stared at the driver. The eyes behind the wheel, the eyes of a macaque, did not waver from the stoplight's red circle. Just outside the window, someone was looking in, but the eyes of the rhesus were on the red circle.

A line of cars stopped behind the Brougham.

Gaspar continued to stare at the man in the Cadillac for a moment, and then, with creaking difficulty, he bent and picked up the smoldering butt of stogie.

The old man walked the two steps to the car — as Billy watched in confusion — thrust his face forward till it was mere inches from the driver's profile, and said with extreme sweetness, "I think you dropped this in our living room."

And as the glazed simian eyes turned to stare directly into the pedestrian's face, nearly nose-to-nose, Gaspar casually flipped the butt with its red glowing tip, into the back seat of the Cadillac, where it began to burn a hole in the fine Corinthian leather.

Three things happened simultaneously:

The driver let out a howl, tried to see the butt in his rear-view mirror, could not get the angle, tried to look over his shoulder into the back seat but without a neck could not perform that feat of agility, put the car into neutral, opened his door and stormed into the street trying to grab Gaspar.

"You fuckin' bastid, whaddaya think you're doin' tuh my car you asshole bastid, I'll kill ya ..."

Billy's hair stood on end as he saw what Gaspar was doing; he rushed back the short distance in the crosswalk to grab the old man; Gaspar would not be dragged away, stood smiling with unconcealed pleasure at the mad bull rampaging and screaming of the hysterical driver. Billy yanked as hard as he could and Gaspar began to move away, around the front of the Cadillac, toward the far curb. Still grinning with octogeneric charm.

The light changed.

These three things happened in the space of five seconds, abetted by the impatient honking of the cars behind the Brougham; as the light turned green.

Screaming, dragging, honking, as the driver found he could not do three things at once: he could not go after Gaspar while the traffic was clanging at him; could not let go of the car door to crawl into the back seat from which now came the stench of charring leather that could not be rectified by an inexpensive Tijuana tuck-n-roll; could not save his back seat and at the same time stave off the hostility of a dozen drivers cursing and honking. He trembled there, torn three ways, doing nothing.

Billy dragged Gaspar.

Out of the crosswalk. Out of the street. Onto the curb. Up the side street. Into the alley. Through a backyard. To the next street from the avenue.

Puffing with the exertion, Billy stopped at last, five houses up the street. Gaspar was still grinning, chuckling softly with unconcealed pleasure at his puckish ways. Billy turned on him with wild gesticulations and babble.

"You're nuts!"

"How about that?" the old man said, giving Billy an affectionate poke in the bicep.

"Nuts! Looney! That guy would've torn off your head! What the hell's wrong with you, old man? Are you out of your boots?"

"I'm not crazy. I'm responsible."

"Responsible?! Responsible, fer chrissakes? For what? For all the butts every yotz throws into the street?"

The old man nodded. "For butts, and trash, and pollution, and toxic waste dumping in the dead of night; for bushes, and cactus, and the baobab tree; for pippin apples and even lima beans, which I despise. You show me someone who'll eat lima beans without being at gunpoint, I'll show you a pervert!"

Billy was screaming. "What the hell are you talking about?"

"I'm also responsible for dogs and cats and guppies and cockroaches and the President of the

United States and Jonas Salk and your mother and the entire chorus line at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas. Also their choreographer."

"Who do you think you are? God?"

"Don't be sacrilegious. I'm too old to wash your mouth out with laundry soap. Of course I'm not God. I'm just an old man. *But I'm responsible.*"

Gaspar started to walk away, toward the corner and the avenue, and a resumption of their route. Billy stood where the old man's words had pinned him.

"Come on, young fella," Gaspar said, walking backward to speak to him, "we'll miss the beginning of the movie. I hate that."

Billy had finished eating, and they were sitting in the dimness of the apartment, only the lamp in the corner lit. The old man had gone to the County Art Museum and had bought inexpensive prints—Max Ernst, Gêrome, Richard Dadd, a subtle Feininger—which he had mounted in Insta-Frames. They sat in silence for a time, relaxing; then murmuring trivialities in a pleasant undertone.

Finally, Gaspar said, "I've been thinking a lot about my dying. I like what Woody Allen said."

Billy slid to a more comfortable position in the lounge. "What was that?"

"He said: I don't mind dying. I just don't want to be there when it happens."

Billy snickered.

"I feel something like that, Billy. I'm not afraid to go, but I don't want to leave Minna entirely. The times I spend with her, talking to her, well, it gives me the feeling we're still in touch. When I go, that's the end of Minna. She'll be well and truly dead. We never had any children, almost everyone who knew us is gone, no relatives. And we never did anything important that anyone would put in a record book, so that's the end of us. For me, I don't mind; but I wish there was someone who knew about Minna ... she was a remarkable person."

So Billy said, "Tell me. I'll remember for you."

Memories in no particular order. Some as strong as ropes that could pull the ocean ashore. Some that shimmered and swayed in the faintest breeze like spiderwebs. The entire person, all the little movements, that dimple that appeared when she was amused at something foolish he had said. Their youth together, their love, the procession of their days toward middle age. The small cheers and the pain of dreams never realized. So much about him, as he spoke of her. His voice soft and warm and filled with a longing so deep and true that he had to stop frequently because the words broke out and would not come out till he had

thought away some of the passion. He thought of her and was glad. He had gathered her together, all her dowry of love and taking care of him, her clothes and the way she wore them, her favorite knickknacks, a few clever remarks; and he packed it all up and delivered it to a new repository.

The very old man gave Minna to Billy Kinetta for safekeeping.

Dawn had come. The light filtering in through the blinds was saffron. "Thank you, Dad," Billy said. He could not name the feeling that had taken him hours earlier. But he said this: "I've never had to be responsible for anything, or anyone, in my whole life. I never belonged to anybody ... I don't know why. It didn't bother me, because I didn't know any other way to be."

Then his position changed, there in the lounge. He sat up in a way that Gaspar thought was important. As if Billy were about to open the secret box buried at his center. And Billy spoke so softly the old man had to strain to hear him.

"I didn't even know him."

"We were defending the airfield at Danang. Did I tell you we were 1st Battalion, 9th Marines? Charlie was massing for a big push out of Quang Ngai province, south of us. Looked as if they were going to try to take the provincial capital. My rifle company was assigned to protect the perimeter. They kept sending in patrols to bite us. Every day we'd lose some poor bastard who scratched his head when he shouldn't of. It was June, late in June, cold and a lot of rain. The foxholes were hip-deep in water."

"Flares first. Our howitzers started firing. Then the sky was full of tracers, and I started to turn toward the bushes when I heard something coming, and these two main-force regulars in dark blue uniforms came toward me. I could see them so clearly. Long black hair. All crouched over. And they started firing. And that goddam carbine seized up, wouldn't fire; and I pulled out the banana clip, tried to slap in another, but they saw me and just turned a couple of AK-47s on me ... God, I remember everything slowed down ... I looked at those things, seven-point-six two millimeter assault rifles they were ... I got crazy for a second, tried to figure out in my own mind if they were Russian-made, or Chinese, or Czech, or North Korean. And it was so bright from the flares I could see them starting to squeeze off the rounds, and then from out of nowhere this lance corporal jumped out at them and yelled somedamthing like, 'Hey, you VC fucks, looka here!' except it wasn't that ... I never could recall what he said actually ... and they turned to brace him ... and they opened him up like a baggie full of blood ... and he was all over



me, and the bushes, and oh god there was pieces of him floating on the water I was standing in ..."

Billy was heaving breath with impossible weight. His hands moved in the air before his face without pattern or goal. He kept looking into far corners of the dawn-lit room as if special facts might present themselves to fill out the reasons behind what he was saying.

"Aw, geezus, he was floating on the water ... aw, christ, he got in my boots!" Then a wail of pain so loud it blotted out the sound of traffic beyond the apartment; and he began to moan, but not cry; and the moaning kept on; and Gaspar came from the sofa and held him and said such words as *it's all right*, but they might not have been those words, or *any* words.

And pressed against the old man's shoulder, Billy Kinetta ran on only half sane: "He wasn't my friend, I never knew him, I'd never talked to him, but I'd seen him, he was just this guy, and there wasn't any reason to do that, he didn't know whether I was a good guy or a shit or anything, so why did he do that? He didn't need to do that. They wouldn't of seen him. He was dead before I killed them. He was gone already. I never got to say thank you or thank you or ... *anything!*"

"Now he's in that grave, so I came here to live, so I can go there, but I try and try to say thank you, and he's dead, and he can't hear me, he can't hear anything, he's just down there, down in the ground, and I can't say thank you ... oh, geezus, geezus, why don't he hear me, I just want to say thanks ..."

Billy Kinetta wanted to assume the responsibility for saying thanks, but that was possible only on a night that would never come again; and this was the day.

Gaspar took him to the bedroom and put him down to sleep in exactly the same way one would soothe an old, sick dog.

Then he went to his sofa, and because it was the only thing he could imagine saying, he murmured, "He'll be all right, Minna. Really he will."

When Billy left for the 7-Eleven the next evening, Gaspar was gone. It was an alternate day, and that meant he was out at the cemetery. Billy fretted that he shouldn't be there alone, but the old man had a way of taking care of himself. Billy was not smiling as he thought of his friend, and the word *friend* echoed as he realized that, yes, this was his friend, truly and really his friend. He wondered how old Gaspar was, and how soon Billy Kinetta would be once again what he had always been: alone.

When he returned to the apartment at two-thirty, Gaspar was asleep, cocooned in his blanket on the sofa. Billy went in and tried to sleep, but

hours later, when sleep would not come, when thoughts of murky water and calcium night light on dark foliage kept him staring at the bedroom ceiling, he came out of the room for a drink of water. He wandered around the living room, not wanting to be by himself even if the only companionship in this sleepless night was breathing heavily, himself in sleep.

He stared out the window. Clouds lay in chiffon strips across the sky. The squealing of tires from the street.

Sighing, idle in his movement around the room, he saw the old man's pocket watch lying on the coffee table beside the sofa. He walked to the table. If the watch was still stopped at eleven o'clock, perhaps he would borrow it and have it repaired. It would be a nice thing to do for Gaspar. He loved that beautiful timepiece.

Billy bent to pick it up.

The watch, stopped at the V of eleven precisely, levitated at an angle, floating away from him.

Billy Kinetta felt a shiver travel down his back to burrow in at the base of his spine. He reached for the watch hanging in air before him. It floated away just enough that his fingers massaged empty space. He tried to catch it. The watch eluded him, lazily turning away like an opponent who knows he is in no danger of being struck from behind.

Then Billy realized Gaspar was awake. Turned away from the sofa, nonetheless he knew the old man was observing him. And the blissful floating watch.

He looked at Gaspar.

They did not speak for a long time.

Then: "I'm going back to sleep," Billy said. Quietly.

"I think you have some questions," Gaspar replied.

"Questions? No, of course not, Dad. Why in the world would I have questions? I'm still asleep." But that was not the truth, because he had not been asleep that night.

"Do you know what 'Gaspar' means? Do you remember the three wise men of the Bible, the Magi?"

"I don't want any frankincense and myrrh. I'm going back to bed. I'm going now. You see, I'm going right now."

"Gaspar" means master of the treasure, keeper of the secrets, paladin of the palace." Billy was staring at him, not walking into the bedroom; just staring at him. As the elegant timepiece floated to the old man, who extended his hand palm-up to receive it. The watch nestled in his hand, unmoving, and it made no sound, no sound at all.

"You go back to bed. But will you go out to the cemetery with me tomorrow? It's important."

"Why?"

"Because I believe I'll be dying tomorrow."

It was a nice day, cool and clear. Not at all a day for dying, but neither had been many such days in Southeast Asia, and death had not been deterred.

They stood at Minna's gravesite, and Gaspar opened his shooting stick to form a seat, and he thrust the spike into the ground, and he settled onto it, and sighed, and said to Billy Kinetta, "I'm growing cold as that stone."

"Do you want my jacket?"

"No. I'm cold inside." He looked around at the sky, at the grass, at the rows of markers. "I've been responsible, for all of this, and more."

"You've said that before."

"Young fella, are you by any chance familiar, in your reading, with an old novel by James Hilton called *Lost Horizon*? Perhaps you saw the movie. It was a wonderful movie, actually much better than the book. Mr. Capra's greatest achievement. A human testament. Ronald Colman was superb. Do you know the story?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember the High Lama, played by Sam Jaffe? His name was Father Perrault?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember how he passed on the caretakerhip of that magical hidden world, Shangri-La, to Ronald Colman?"

"Yes, I remember that." Billy paused. "Then he died. He was very old, and he died."

Gaspar smiled up at Billy. "Very good, Billy. I knew you were a good boy. So now, if you remember all that, may I tell you a story? It's not a very long story."

Billy nodded, smiling at his friend.

"In 1582 Pope Gregory XIII decreed that the civilized world would no longer observe the Julian calendar. October 4th, 1582 was followed, the next day, by October 15th. Eleven days vanished from the world. One hundred and seventy years later, the British Parliament followed suit, and September 2nd, 1752 was followed, the next day, by September 14th. Why did he do that, the Pope?"

Billy was bewildered by the conversation. "Because he was bringing it into synch with the real world. The solstices and equinoxes. When to plant, when to harvest."

Gaspar wagged a finger at him with pleasure. "Excellent, young fella. And you're correct when you say Gregory abolished the Julian calendar because its error of one day in every one hundred and twenty-eight years had moved the vernal equinox to March 11th. That's what the history books say. It's what every history book says. But

what if?"

"What if *what*? I don't know what you're talking about."

"What if: Pope Gregory had the knowledge revealed to him that he *must* readjust time in the minds of men? What if: the excess time in 1582 was eleven days and one hour? What if: he accounted for those eleven days, vanished those eleven days, but that one hour slipped free, was left loose to bounce through eternity? A very special hour ... an hour that must *never* be used ... an hour that must never toll. What if?"

Billy spread his hands. "What if, what if, what if! It's all just philosophy. It doesn't mean anything. Hours aren't real, time isn't something that you can bottle up. So what if there is an hour out there somewhere that ..."

And he stopped.

He grew tense, and leaned down to the old man. "The watch. Your watch. It doesn't work. It's stopped."

Gaspar nodded. "At eleven o'clock. My watch works; it keeps very special time, for one very special hour."

Billy touched Gaspar's shoulder. Carefully he asked, "Who are you, Dad?"

The old man did not smile as he said, "Gaspar. Keeper. Paladin. Guardian."

"Father Perrault was hundreds of years old."

Gaspar shook his head with a wistful expression on his old face. "I'm eighty-six years old, Billy. You asked me if I thought I was God. Not God, not Father Perrault, not an immortal, just an old man who will die too soon. Are you Ronald Colman?"

Billy nervously touched his lower lip with a finger. He looked at Gaspar as long as he could, then turned away. He walked off a few paces, stared at the barren trees. It seemed suddenly much chillier here in this place of entombed remembrances. From a distance he said, "But it's only ... what? A chronological convenience. Like daylight saving time; Spring forward, Fall back. We don't actually *lose* an hour; we get it back."

Gaspar stared at Minna's grave. "At the end of April I lost an hour. If I die now, I'll die an hour short in my life. I'll have been cheated out of one hour I want, Billy." He swayed toward all he had left of Minna. "One last hour I could have with my old girl. That's what I'm afraid of, Billy. I have that hour in my possession. I'm afraid I'll use it, god help me, I want so much to use it."

Billy came to him. Tense, and chilled, he said, "Why must that hour never toll?"

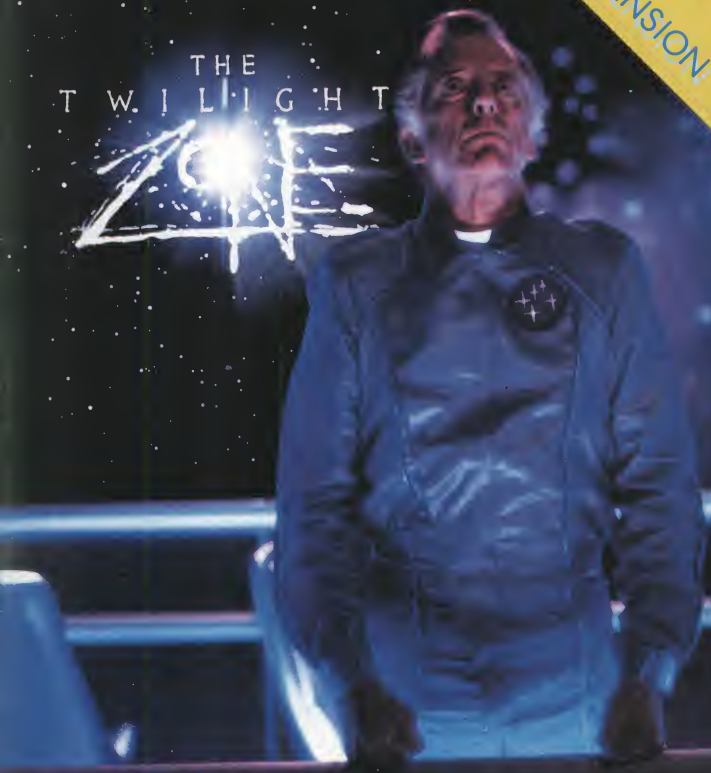
Gaspar drew a deep breath and tore his eyes away from the grave. His gaze locked with Billy's. And he told him.

(continued on page 104)

RETURN TO
ANOTHER DIMENSION

THE
T W I L I G H T

ZONE



THE
TWILIGHT



4.

STARBURSTS

by Peter Rondinone

6.

ADVENTURES IN THE SCREAM TRADE

by Ben Herndon

10.

REAL TUBE TERROR

by Ben Herndon

12.

ELLISON'S RULES

by Ben Herndon

13.

TALKING TWILIGHT ZONE

by Carol Serling

We all remember the images. A World War II bomber lost in the desert—and in time. A diner with extraterrestrial help. A shadowy figure on the wing of an airliner. A scrap of melody suggesting a world behind the membrane of our own.

This is a book of images, images awaiting movement. We'll all be watching the episodes pictured here; we'll all remember them. But sometimes we forget that writers are behind the sound and color. Inside are two of the best, Harlan Ellison and Stephen King, talking about their craft, and *Twilight Zone* producer Phil DeGuere, talking about how he put it all together.

—Michael Blaine
Editor in Chief
Twilight Zone Magazine

Designed by Joan Leslie Peckolick
All photos by Randy Tepper. Copyright CBS Inc.



OPEN
THE WINDOWS



TO YOUR
IMAGINATION



Starbursts on the *Twilight* Zone

"I'M PART OF THE NIGHTMARE.
IT SORT OF SWALLOWS ME UP,"
SAYS ANNIE POTTS



ROBERT KLEIN

TZ: In "Word Play," how does your character react when he wakes up and finds everyone speaks a different language?

KLEIN: Actually, it happens very gradually, which is part of the dramatic build. His neighbor says, "Ginger had six pups. Isn't that unusual for an encyclopedia?" Then as the day progresses, his wife is babbling what is nonsense to him, and it really develops into an emergency situation.

TZ: Was there anything special about working on *Twilight Zone* you'd like to share?

KLEIN: Something I found amusing was that the narration was written exactly as if Rod Serling were alive. And I was always kidding in imitation: "A man... just yesterday had to learn thirty-six words. And now... he must learn thirty-six more because he went into the twilight zone."

TZ: Do you have any special interest in the fantasy genre?

KLEIN: Well, comedy is my specialty. But this was a real treat. I had to cry in it, and I think this will impress people. Gee, Robert Klein, he can be serious. And I think the tv script by Rockne O'Bannon is the best I've seen in a long time.

by Peter Rondinone



ELLIOTT GOULD

TZ: What is the name of the episode you appear in, who do you play, and what is it about?

GOULD: The episode is the "Misfortune Cookie," and I play Harry Folger, a reporter for a newspaper who reviews restaurants, a food critic; and he gets into trouble. Well, it's really about vanity, arrogance, and hunger. And there are a number of "misfortune cookies," each with its own message, which follows the character. But I don't want to give away the surprise. It does have the feel of the original *Twilight Zone*.

TZ: With directors like William Friedkin of *Exorcist* fame directing the *Twilight Zone* and Steven Spielberg launching his competitive series, *Amazing Tales*, do you think it is becoming prestigious for stars like yourself to appear in *Twilight Zone*?

GOULD: Oh, yes! I think CBS has put together a quality production and a great crew. And it's always a pleasure to work on a quality show. I do think *Twilight Zone* will be very competitive.

TZ: Is there anything special from *The Twilight Zone* you'd like to share with our readers?

GOULD: Ummm, yes. Lots of fresh Chinese food.



CAROLYN SEYMOUR

TZ: What is your episode about?

SEYMOUR: It's "Ye Gods," and it's about Cupid who zaps a guy who falls in love with a girl he can't get hold of. But unfortunately Cupid's powers are on the wane due to an unrequited love affair with one of the Furies—and that's me.

TZ: What was special about working on *The Twilight Zone*?

SEYMOUR: Well, it's not often you get a chance to play a heavy and have great fun. I walk around with a snake on my shoulder—a fifteen-pound boa. I mean, there are many people who would agree I am absolutely suited for the horror genre. I love snakes. When I was a kid, I played with maggots . . . I absolutely love *The Twilight Zone*!



ANNIE POTTS

TZ: Tell us about your *Twilight Zone*, "Word Play."

POTTS: Well, I don't think they'd appreciate it if I revealed what the show is about. My impression was—it's not like Spielberg's scripts, which, you know, are written in invisible ink, but there are wonderful surprises, and I don't want to spoil the fun. But it's about a man who wakes up to find that a language once familiar to him is no longer familiar and everybody thinks he's crazy, and he thinks everybody else is crazy. And I'm his wife, and I think he's crazy!

TZ: Did the original *TZ* affect your performance?

POTTS: I cut my teeth on the original *Twilight Zone*—and when I was offered one I was thrilled. Did it affect my acting? Well, I just had a memory of the old *Twilight Zone*—shots I remembered in my head. Not that that means anything—just pleasant things to keep in my head while working.

TZ: Wes Craven, who directed "Nightmare On Elm Street," directed your episode. Do you think he brought in a "nightmare" quality?

POTTS: My impression is yes—that's what he was heading toward. And I'm part of the nightmare. It sort of swallows me up.

New Adventures in the Scream Trade

A NON-STOP KING TAKES ON TV



Stephen King

by Ben Herndon

In his definitive survey of horror, *Danse Macabre*, Stephen King demonstrated what readers and critics had always assumed—that his own endeavors in the genre were solidly based on an intimate acquaintance with past horror literature and films. As we spoke, King adroitly picked his way through the last thirty years of horror in fiction, cinema, radio, and television. He also probed his early encounters with screenwriting, his recollections of the original *Twilight Zone*, and the phenomemon of Rod Serling as we discussed the adaptation of his short story "Gamma" for the new *Twilight Zone*.

TZ: Now that you have the screenplays for *Creepshow* and *Ca's Eye* under your belt, what have you found to be the pleasures and pitfalls of adapting your own stories for the screen?

KING: I like it because it's fast, I like it because it's visual, and I like it because it's work for idiots in the sense that it's all like skating—it's this totally surface phenomenon. If you're writing a novel, it's like being in the water—half of you is always in and half of you is always out, in the sense that half of what you're dealing with are events and half of what you're dealing with are people's reactions to those events. Now do

you want to talk about what I don't like about it? I don't like the fact that everybody in the world wants to put a handprint on what you do. Everybody in the world wants to say to you, "This doesn't work, this isn't enough motivation, this isn't deep enough, or this situation is too static, you need to bring in a new element here." It's the major culprit in the business of failing to bring books and stories to movies.

TZ: What is the reason your books have not adapted well to the screen?

KING: I just gave it to you. The movie result is something like the victim of a vampire. That is to say, it looks like Lucy Westenra, but it really isn't Lucy Westenra any more, you know what I mean? It's very cold at that point.

TZ: Do you feel you'll have better control of the film if you write your own screenplay?

KING: Well, I don't know. At this point, I've had two screenplays produced and actually brought out. One was *Creepshow*, which was a good-sized success, and the second one was *Cat's Eye*, which, financially speaking, was a good-sized failure. There are reasons for that which don't have anything to do with the movie. They have to do with the production end of it. At MGM, the whole top echelon of executives fell, and all the pictures that had been produced under those people became orphans. There were maybe six pictures, and *Cat's Eye* was one of them. There were no trailers, no publicity, and no promotion—that sort of thing. But beyond that, there were a lot of other factors. The point is, both of those movies were anthology movies. It'll be interesting to see what happens with *Silver Bullet*, which is actually a "movie" movie.

TZ: Is this the film based on your "Cycle of the Werewolf"? How were you involved with that project?

KING: I wrote a screenplay for *Silver Bullet* and wrote and am going to direct a film called *Maximum Overdrive* for Dino DeLaurentiis.

TZ: Is your desire to direct based on the need to protect the integrity of your work?

KING: You're not quite right when you say it's one more step to "protect the integrity of the work." I don't care about the integrity of the work at all ... well, I do a little bit. But no more than, say, a father who sends his daughter off to college. You hope that the girl is not going to get gang-banged at a fraternity, and you hope that the girl is not going to turn into a little roundheels—or something like that—but at the same

time, if you've got any intelligence you realize that at a certain point she has to go her own way and her virginity—her propriety or whatever—is no longer your own concern, your personal concern. And in the same way, if somebody pays a lot of money for the rights to a book that I wrote and they're going to make a film out of it—I hope that it will be treated well. I have a logical right to expect that it will be treated well because I want to protect my own investment, correct? But at the same time, if I'm not involved with the project, it has nothing to do with me. If it's good—fantastic. But I didn't have anything to do with it being good any more than I had to do with *Carrie* being a good movie. If it's bad—as *Firestarter* was bad—I don't have anything to do with that. In the case of *Maximum Overdrive*, what I'm doing is seeing whether or not I can take whatever it is that makes people like the books, and buy the books in big numbers, over into the film and see if people will really like it. You might be familiar with a short story called "Trucks" in *Night Shift*. *Maximum Overdrive* is an expansion of that.

TZ: How did Rod Serling's work on *The Twilight Zone* influence your style of writing?

KING: It taught me some bad things, man. It taught me that short stories had to have O. Henry endings, which is something that I later found out isn't necessarily the truth. It isn't always a cheat to the reader to progress in a straight line; endings don't always have to be a funky double-reverse. But I still don't believe critics of the short story who say the O. Henry ending is inherently bad. You remember *The Twilight Zone* where the guy finally had time enough to read and he broke his glasses? There's nothing wrong with that. To me, that's a perfectly acceptable ending. What's a better story ending is the one in the TZ show, "The Shelter," where it [the UFO warning that induces a family to lock their neighbors out of its fall-out shelter] turns out to be just a mistake and they have to go up and face each other. That's real short-story telling. But you know what the show really did for me was bring me into contact with a lot of writers whose names I first saw as credits on *The Twilight Zone*. And then later, when I was sensitized to those names, I began to see their books, pick them up, and read them. Chuck Beaumont in particular ... also Richard Matheson.

TZ: Of the 156 episodes, I believe

Serling wrote 92 of them himself.

KING: I'm on record in *Danse Macabre* as saying that ... well, Serling himself said that "a third of what I wrote for the series was crap," and I think that's about right. I think a third of what he wrote for the series was crap. I also think a third of what he wrote was inspired, and the rest of it was pretty good. But what he did have was this very clear view of what this series was about—so that it achieved a remarkably high consistency and quite a lot of quality too. I mean Serling was *The Twilight Zone*. It's amazing if you sit down and figure out what he wrote. You wonder how he ever did it. I mean, people think I'm prolific! What is especially amazing is how many he did that were really, really good that were just pulled out of thin air. They weren't adaptations of stories. Matheson adapted—people don't know this, but "Third from the Sun" was a short story before it was a teleplay. And I think some of the Beaumont stuff were short stories before they were teleplays. Most of what Serling did were not adaptations. Serling came from a sort of radio and tv drama background and came to fantasy through the back door. He didn't know what had been done, and so he had the courage to just try everything. But I have written this kind of stuff since I was a kid. I have always loved it, whereas Serling—so far as I know—wrote very little fantasy until he started to work on *The Twilight Zone*. And then he was like this guy observing a huge untilled field—because he didn't know that other people had worked in it—saying, "Think of all the things that I can do!" And he just went out and did 'em, and a lot of 'em were great. The first couple of years you're looking at the work of a man who was just entranced with the idea that he didn't have to be totally realistic in every way. The first two years—and they were the best—were the work of a man drunk on fantasy.

TZ: You've certainly taken horror/fantasy into a more realistic realm.

KING: No, that's nothing I did. Matheson did it, and *The Twilight Zone* did it too. That was something that maybe I did take from *The Twilight Zone*. How many of those things had backgrounds like—you remember, the episode about Shatner finding this little devil in a restaurant? It's the most prosaic setting in the world. If not for that little devil, that would have been a boring story. So I owe some of that to *The Twilight Zone*, certainly.

THE
TWILIGHT
ZONE





Clockwise from far left: Fritz Weaver ('The Star'), Exene Cervenka ('Nightcrawlers'), Jaclyn Bernstein, child ('Children's Zoo'), Weaver in helmet, Gerd Oswald (director, 'The Star'), Robert Swan ('Nightcrawlers')



Real Tube Terror

THE SECRETARIES WERE SCARED TO TYPE 'GRAMMA'

by Ben Herndon

“We plan to produce the most terrifying thing you will ever see on television,” Harlan Ellison asserts, referring to his teleplay adaptation of Stephen King’s “Gramma.”

“This is about a small boy,” recounts Ellison, “an eleven-year-old boy who’s been left alone on an afternoon to watch his Gramma. His brother has broken his leg in Little League, and his mother has gone fifteen or sixteen miles into town. It’s a rural area, and he’s left with Gramma—an incredibly obese, old, old, woman—blind, a terrifying figure. Scares the hell out of the kid as a lot of grandparents of that kind do scare children, and that’s what Stephen has tapped into—universal fear, the off-putting feeling that kids

get around old people. He is terrified of her. He’s left to mind her.”

King sheds some light on the origin of this disturbing tale: “My grandmother died when I was in the house alone with her. I was the same age as the boy in the story. Obviously, she didn’t get up and walk or anything like that, but it was my first experience with death. I was always afraid of her because the only time that I knew her was when my mother moved back to take care of her and she, by that time, was senile. And she was—to me—very frightening. She was this huge, grossly fat woman with all these billows of snow white hair. She still remembered all the presidents up to Roosevelt, and she could decline all the irregular Latin verbs, but she couldn’t remember what she’d had for breakfast. She had no eyesight... the eyes had been blown out by high blood pressure, glaucoma, diabetes, God

knew what. No, she was *not* a love object of mine.” King laughs. “She was HORRIBLE!”

Ellison is confident that the strength of the script and the high production values will make for an entertaining nightmare. “I think the entire show will be a high water mark for terror on television. I don’t see any point in doing things that anybody can do. If I do something, I want to do something to fry people’s eyeballs. I’m working very closely with the set designers and with director William Friedkin. He loves the script and wants to do it right. We’ve picked a very Kafkaesque way of doing it, with the look of movies, like the original *Mystery of the Wax Museum* or *The Haunting*—films that rely on mood rather than special effects. The walls, for instance, are being built on the set in such a way that they tilt,*disorienting the viewer from scene to scene.”

As frightening as the original short story was, there were problems in translating it into an effective teleplay. “It was a very difficult script to write,” points out Ellison, “because there’re no characters, no dialogue, and no action. It’s all internal. So I had to externalize everything and come up with some ways of doing it that captured the essence of what Stephen was talking about. He would take five or six pages of internal monologue, and I had to encapsulate that into one image.

“And, of course, I owe it to Stephen King to make sure that I do what he has written well. I’ve spoken to him, and he’s very enthusiastic about the script. I do a film column for *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and I have done two very long essays on why Stephen



Scott Paulin in DeGuere's 'Nightcrawlers.'

King's books do not adapt well to the screen. Then, all of a sudden, I found myself confronted with the job of doing that very thing. I had to put my talent where my mouth was."

King voiced approval of Ellison's teleplay. "I read it. It's very good. It's an interesting piece of work because he did two drafts for the TZ people. The first one was a more interior story. The second dramatized the background in some interesting ways. If I had dramatized it myself, I think it would have come out looking pretty much the way that Harlan's did, but I don't know if it would've been as clearly professional in terms of tv requirements. He handled a lot of stuff that could have been delicate—because tv networks have this problem with children in jeopardy—very well. I'm delighted with the screenplay, and I'm delighted with the way he handled those problems."

Ellison is obviously very proud of "Gramma." "I'm not the kind to get nervous," he asserts, "because I know how good I am. That's going to look terrific in print. I see no reason to be humble. I mean, I've been working at it thirty years, and if I demonstrate a false humility, then, well, I think it's disingenuous to lie about it. I write as well as I can, and I did this script with a great deal of enthusiasm. People get terrified just reading the script! The women who were transferring it into the word processor had to stop and pass it over to someone else. They couldn't go any further on the first reading."

What manner of teleplay has the power to reduce the CBS typing pool to a gibbering mob? "I'll give you a f'rinstance," Ellison offers. "Most of the show takes place in the kitchen. When his mother leaves, the boy walks around the room, but he stays at the outside edges. He goes all the way around the outer walls rather than going down the hall that leads to Gramma's bedroom. At some point early in the show, he stands in the doorway with a light on in the kitchen behind him and his shadow lying out before him in the hall. Suddenly, his shadow elongates, slithers down the hall, and turns left into Gramma's room And that's just one scene that will scare the hell out of people!"

"That's a scary story," agrees King. "It scared me to write that story. There's nothing there but situation. I mean past a certain level," laughs King, "it's just this boy and his grandmother . . . just a boy and his gram'."

**Scott Paulin in DeGuere's
'Nightcrawlers.' Story by
Robert McCammon.**



Ellison's Rules



Bruce Willis in Ellison's 'Shatterday.'

SPACE ARMADAS AND TV MINE FIELDS

by Ben Herndon

Readers familiar with Harlan Ellison's non-fiction essays on the electronic media may be surprised to see him back on the writing staff of a network tv series. The original collection of Ellison's *Los Angeles Free Press* television columns, published as *The Glass Teat*, and the follow-up collection, *The Other Glass Teat*, were laced with such merciless commentary and vitriolic humor that they left no doubt that Ellison despised the anti-intellectual attitudes of the network powers that be.

Lately, however, his cohorts on *The Twilight Zone* tell of a Harlan Ellison whose enthusiasm is as contagious as it is inspiring. During our conversation about his role as creative consultant for *The Twilight Zone* writing staff, I asked Ellison about network interference and the challenge of translating his own work to the screen.

TZ: Has your attitude toward the networks softened since the days of *The Glass Teat* essays?

ELLISON: No... no, the situation is exactly the same. Wherever you have big bucks at stake, you're going to have what Pauline Kael called "a business man in charge of an art form." With *The Twilight Zone* we are blessed; at least at this point, we are exempt from all that. We are clearly an island in the midst of this whole television thing. They are leaving us alone for the most part. We've had the usual network input as they call it—and perhaps that should be in quotes—"input" meaning that everybody who wears a suit feels that he or she has the right to give an opinion. They have to say something about every show because that's how they earn their money. They are put there as a sort of interface between us and the audience, and they say, "Okay, keep these people sane if not honest." Sometimes what they say is very intelligent, to the point,

and useful to us. Other times, it's imbecilic because these are not story people, they are executives. But you put up with that. That's one of the rules of the game—you put up with it until the point where you can't put up with it. Thus far, it has been a salutary relationship. Our fights have been few and far between.

TZ: How do you feel about the way your stories have been adapted for tv and film?

ELLISON: The two *Outer Limits* I did ("Soldier" and "Demon with a Glass Hand") were good. The *Burke's Laws* that I did were good. I despise the *Star Trek* episode "City on the Edge of Forever" because it's not the script that I wrote; it's the shell of it. The accepted wisdom is that I wrote a script that was impossible to shoot and too expensive. I was introduced at a conference by someone who had been on the show, an actor, who was talking about how brilliant the script was but, unfortunately, it was too expensive—it had warring space armadas.... Well, my shows never had space armadas in them at all. They say that now because they choose not to remember that what they wanted was a show that was, I suppose, a lot less passionate than what I had written. I'm not wild about the *Star Trek*. I've never loved the *Star Trek*. It's won awards and continues to be the most popular one. My response is you shoulda seen the original.

I like the movie of *A Boy and His Dog*, but I don't like the ending. I don't like the last line, which is a stupid, sexist pun that amuses pointy-headed college boys. They think it's funny when, in fact, it's brutal... demeaning to the death of a human being. The dog, Blood, would never have said anything like that. But I do like the film. I like the film very much. I think it was made conscientiously and made inventively. But most of my stuff has not been done well, which is why I haven't sold much of my stuff to television. I won't let them do it.

Talking Twilight Zone

SERLING: How did you get involved in the TZ series?

DEGUERE: A wonderful accident in timing, as far as I was concerned. I was concluding a contract at Universal, and I was looking for something a little more challenging than the regular, you know, whip-up-some-pilot based on what whoever is in charge thinks might work. I was going to take the best of the offers available to me, which was at Paramount. In fact, I was on my way to Paramount when CBS called and offered *Twilight Zone* with a thirteen-week on-the-air commitment. I couldn't pass that up. It was the first time in my professional career that anyone had offered me a job that was genuinely challenging and worthy of complete involvement.

SERLING: Does the problem of retaining viewer interest with the anthology format concern you at all?

DEGUERE: Slightly, but not much. We're going with the idea that the stories are the *Twilight Zone*, and we make them compelling. That is, we try to remember we're telling stories about people and we've got to feel and get involved with the people to get the right mix. There isn't an audience for an anthology of scary stories, or an anthology of morality stories, or an anthology of tongue-in-cheek fantasy stories; it's the mixture of those things every week that we'll find people tuning in for—an unexpected hour of real entertainment.

SERLING: How would you describe the type of story you're doing?

DEGUERE: Psychological fantasy is the way we've come to describe it.

SERLING: What does that really mean?

DEGUERE: What it means is they are fantasies. Stories that take place in or have elements that are not part of everyday reality, but which reveal fundamental psychological truths about people. I'm trying to get away from inappropriate terminology. *Twilight Zone*, for whatever reason, seemed to end up defining its own genre, and I don't want it labeled horror or fantasy or the S word.

SERLING: Futuristic ... certainly not science fiction!

DEGUERE: The S word. You don't say the S word here.

SERLING: Is there anything about psychological fantasy that really scares you?

DEGUERE: Oh sure. A lot of these things scare me. In fact, that's one of the things I look for.

SERLING: If it gets the juices running.

DEGUERE: Yeah! I sat in on the rough-cut screening at CBS, and I was scared. It was powerful, and I knew the stuff. I cut the films, I worked on the scripts, and they still scared me.

SERLING: Have you had trouble finding writers, directors...?

DEGUERE: We've had no trouble finding writers, and that is very, very surprising for television and the movie business because writing is the hardest of jobs. We've attracted wonderful writers, whose scripts have attracted a lot of attention from stars and directors. The problem has been in getting directors who are capable of handling this material and getting them to commit to shows that are so short. In other words, how do I go to a director who is in development on two different features and ask him to sign up for six days in June?

SERLING: Does one director do all three segments of the one-hour show?

DEGUERE: No. Each segment is being produced independently as a mini-movie with its own look, its own director, its own cast. Each will have its own feeling, its own style.

SERLING: A lot has been said lately about ageism. Producer/writer William Froug has been quoted as saying, "After forty, unless you're a superstar, forget it. You're over the hill." Do you find the TV industry a youth-oriented business that discriminates against older writers? Are your writers younger people who have, perhaps, a more contemporary angle?

DEGUERE: Television has always been something of a younger person's medium for a number of



Producer Phil DeGuere

reasons. First, the stress and strain are such that you get tired of it after a while. Secondly, if by the time you're thirty-five at the network you haven't made it into a fairly large, secure position, the odds are that you're going to leave and let a new person come in. I have found with writers who did their primary work in television ten or more years ago, a conflict in working approach. I think we're much more adventurous with our screen plays. Many of us studied film in school, so we have strong backgrounds and we're willing to do any number of weird things. But even with writers whose work I admire, whom I knew from the sixties, it just doesn't seem to connect. They feel that the things we ask them to do are arbitrary, or that we endlessly ask them to rewrite.

SERLING: Has the network rejected any story lines? Has censorship been a problem?

DEGUERE: No, absolutely no, not at all. Not what I would call censorship. There have been some shows that the network has fought us on. But

by Carol Serling

Talking Twilight Zone

that's always been on an aesthetic level. They were stories that we'd like to tell but that the network didn't think were good stories.

SERLING: But it's strictly a story matter—not that you're dealing with an issue that they don't want to touch?

DEGUERE: No, none of that. You have to understand that I am an extremely nonpolitical producer. I don't see television as a means of social change. I see it as a means of social commentary in the sense that you hold a mirror up and you show a problem, but you show it without attaching a specific message to it.

SERLING: No moralizing? No preaching?

DEGUERE: As little as possible.

SERLING: What about special effects?

DEGUERE: What about them? They're expensive. They're time consuming. They're a pain. And they never work right.

SERLING: So there's not going to be a big emphasis on them?

DEGUERE: There never has been. However, we are doing something fairly radical on this show. We're shooting it on film and delivering it on tape, so we will have a lot of video effects. If you remember *Star Wars* when Princess Leia used R2D2 to send a message to Obi Kenobi, it was a video image that appeared in the film.

SERLING: How about the music. Are you using the old music?

DEGUERE: We have done the new main title with music by the Grateful Dead, which is an extraordinary piece. It's an abstract composition that is entirely in keeping with the kind of music that was intended for the show in the late '50s. Only now that musical sophistication has progressed, what we have is a satisfying and exciting interpretation of those original eight notes of Marius Constant's by one of the most important modern musical groups around—the Grateful Dead.

SERLING: I think the music is very important. It brings it all back. Spielberg said, "It's that clarion call that draws you to your tv set." Are you going to redo some of the old TZs?

DEGUERE: Yes, almost definitely, although we haven't gotten around to doing any yet. What happened was that we came up with a fabulous col-

lection of scripts before the writers' strike, and we've been shooting and polishing them. But we will redo some. One we're sure about is "The Night of the Meek," the Santa Claus story with Art Carney, originally done on video. I believe everyone feels that the video shows were not as successful as the film shows, so that's the one we know we're going to try.

SERLING: Do you feel that the old TZ is a monkey on your back?

DEGUERE: No, I don't. I may be kidding myself, but everybody else involved in the show has continually felt that the old *Twilight Zone* is like a protective aura around us. We feel like we have ... it's crazy to say ... we feel that we have Rod Serling's blessing, and the enthusiasm that people have brought to the show, the excitement, the dedication, the commitment have been extraordinary.

SERLING: A labor of love?

DEGUERE: The old show was a genuine inspiration. Of course, we're not imitating it. We're not trying to do it again, or pay homage to it. We're trying to step off from where that lives in everybody's memory and jump out into the future, as *Twilight Zone* magazine has. You know the magazine wouldn't just reprint old stories, but it's encouraging people to carry on.

SERLING: I know that Rod had no idea that the original TZ show would appeal to the young. But your early show time suggests that you hope to pick up a large younger audience.

DEGUERE: Yes, it's possible, but you never can tell. Television is a funny animal. Until you put it up there, you're never going to know. What we got for them is beyond anything they ever imagined. The shows may be too intense for tv. But I don't think so. I think that tv has, consciously or unconsciously, very seriously underestimated the appetite of the audience.

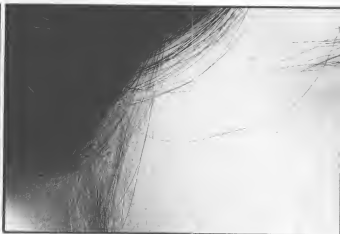
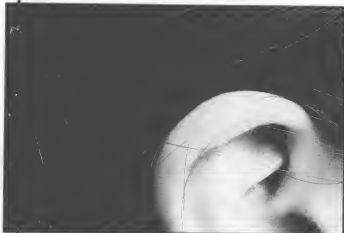
SERLING: Mencken said that you can never underestimate the intellect of a mass audience.

DEGUERE: Nobody ever went broke underestimating. But I'd rather take a chance on overestimating and hope that we raise audiences' expectations about television, instead of just being safe.

(right) Arliss Howard in 'Kentucky Rye.'







DWINDLING

*Her husband was one of those men.
On. The. Way. Up. So she followed
him everywhere. Up North. Down
South. And into the blank states.*

by ANNETTE HARD

She had forgotten how long she had been driving down the road, the dusty road that led to places that she did not know.

With an effort, she remembered that she had left the house at ten o'clock in the morning to go to the shopping center. She had backed the car out of the driveway without the smallest premonition of disaster. If anything, she had been struck by a sense of freedom. It had taken her almost a week to whip things into a semblance of order and adjust her furniture and herself to the new house after they had moved all the way from New Jersey to a large, strange city in Texas. Things had to be unpacked and arranged and accounted for. Scott, her five-year-old son, had gone all sullen and silly and had begun wetting his bed with a grim regularity at the thought of having to make new friends.

She had been house-bound and child-bound for a week until, as she told Tom, she was ready to climb the walls or take the next train to the funny farm if she didn't get some relief. But by the end of the week, as it usually happened, through the

friend of a friend of a neighbor who was kind enough to drop by, she had gotten the services of a cleaning woman *cum* sitter and within minutes after the old Mexican woman had walked through the back door and gotten instructions, she had flung herself out of the front door and hurried to her car.

She inspected herself gravely in the rearview mirror, adjusting the casual sweep of her soft brown hair, smugly aware that she looked the part of the impeccably dressed Young Matron in the latest casual attire.

Large, fanciful sunglasses hid the color and depth of her eyes, even from herself. Her lips were painted a lickery-slickery pink. She had—yes—she had to hand it to herself, she had what she privately thought of as The Great American Housewife Look, the look that belonged to those wives whose husbands were On. The. Way. Up.

She wore the ninety-dollar outfit that looked like a million and had been bought on sale at Saks for twenty-three ninety-five. She carried a real leather pocketbook that would have cost a fortune

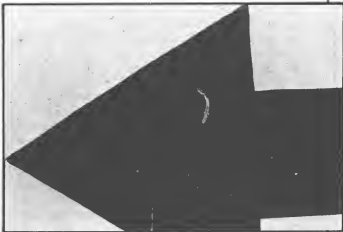
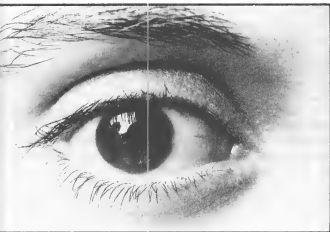


Illustration by Telsu Okunoro

if she had bought it retail, but she had bought it wholesale back East, even then hesitating at the price. But she went ahead and bought it anyway. It was part of The Look, and it never counted unless it was bought on sale or at a discount house where you had to know someone to get in.

Tricks of the trade, tricks of the trade, God knows, she knew them all. She had learned them in Boston and Baltimore and Ponca City and Piscataway. Yes, indeed, her husband was On His Way Up, moving with the times, moving with the money, moving with the companies that promised him the most.

She had moved and settled and moved again in the years that she and Tom had been married. She had lived up North and down South and East and West and back again. She had learned.

Dress right, smile right, and join a lot of things.

She had joined them all.

Needlework groups and art associations. PTAs and PTOs. Garden clubs and Women's Associations. Planned Parenthood and Right to Life. Sometimes she helped to raise funds for the local symphony and, sometimes, for the local insane.

She had learned the art of social chitchat. She could talk with anyone, even a gorilla at a zoo, about flower arrangements and recipes.

She had caught onto the little regional differences. Up North, she said *fine*. Down South, she said *real fine*.

But somewhere along the way the thought would occur to her—and then vanish—that she had forgotten how to say what she really thought and how she really felt.

She smiled, remembering how excited Tom had been when the Texas offer finally came through. At last he was getting his big chance at The Big Time with some big company named the Gulf-Something-Or-Other Company.

She had flown out to Texas with him and spent a frantic week with realtors who talked to them knowingly about the very best areas in which to buy a house for the least amount of money, areas with the very best growth potential in property values.

Pressured by the need to make an instant decision, they had bought a snippy-snappy brand-new house with a luxurious family room and three wee bedrooms in a subdivision that boasted in its brochure about "executive elegance with all-electric everything."

In fact, to all appearances, the subdivision was elegant enough. There were three basic styles of houses within the subdivision—the ranch, the Spanish, and the contemporary, each one set upon a precisely measured green lawn of St. Augustine grass. Pink and white azaleas crowded about the foundations of the houses, and mimosa trees grew in almost all of the front yards. For a light and lovely touch, many of the homes were adorned with hanging baskets of petunias or asparagus ferns that were clustered above the front doors. But upon her lawn, alone among all the houses on her street, languished a young and sickly magnolia tree that almost cried aloud for affection and a higher acid content in the soil.

They had signed and signed again on one dotted line after another, by now a tedious ritual, and returned East where they arranged to have everything shipped to Texas, including themselves, at the company's expense.

"It's all for the best," she had told her friends, friends whom she had loved and cherished for the months that she had lived in Piscataway, New Jersey, friends to whom she now said farewell at the luncheons and bridge parties they gave for her, small rituals that had become as formalized as funerals.

DWINDLING

She had kissed one and hugged another and exchanged a look of mutual loss.

But it always astounded her how easily friends could be replaced.

She drove down the street slowly and composed a silent chant that would bring her back home safely again. From previous experience, she had learned that for the first few weeks in a town, a chant always helped to bring her home again.

"I'm a Hill," she sang silently to herself (herself being Mrs. Thomas Hill), "on 'a valley (the name of her street had the word valley in it) in a forest (she noted as she nosed the car out of her subdivision that the word *forest* flashed in olde golde English lettering) with a gulf," she finished, remembering that Tom now worked for the Gulf-Something-Or-Other Company.

"I'm a hill on a valley in a forest with a gulf," she hummed cheerfully to herself, confident that as long as she remembered that, she could never be lost.

She gunned the car out of the subdivision and onto a feeder road and then turned smartly onto a super-duper highway that led to a shopping center. Within seconds she had lost sight of her subdivision in the rearview mirror and had broken the fragile threads to home.

But she could always return home so long as she remembered and sang to herself ... I'm a hill on a valley in a forest with a gulf ... I'm a hill on a valley in a forest with a gulf ...

She turned into the parking lot at the shopping center, her small, supple hands guiding the little car that would some day be a Cadillac or even a Mercedes into a parking space. She emerged from the car, her face a bland, blank mask of amused assurance. Today she would shop alone. Within a week or two, she'd be coming by here with a new friend and they would lunch together and talk about serious things like home decorating or the economy. And she would be all the way home again.

But how quickly the time went by! She bought groceries and white slacks marked down thirty percent and a plastic jar of soil acidifier for the dying magnolia tree in her front yard. She bought a mechanical car for Scott, who loved cars with all his might. Instinctively, he knew more about the workings of a car's transmission than he knew about the workings of his parents' hearts.

Really, Tom should talk to him more, she thought to herself as she paid for the car.

But Tom traveled so much, had to be away so much! Oh, yes, she understood that. That was the price you paid if your husband was On. The Way. Up. In time, Scott would understand that, too.

She knew what! She would drive right home and unload the groceries and take Scott for a quick bite to *Burger King*! She'd let him order anything he wanted and then she would talk to him seriously

about all the new friends he was going to have in Texas. She might even promise him horseback riding lessons if they weren't too expensive. All he needed was an honest-to-goodness pair of cowboy boots and a cowboy hat and—*blam*—he'd stop crying soon enough about the ol' buddies he'd left back East fast enough!

She smiled and shook her head. Christ, but everything in the whole wide world could be bought! Men could be bought and women could be bought and little boys could be bought for the price of a pair of cowboy boots.

Nothing was wrong with that. If happiness could be bought cheap, why then, it just meant that there was that much more happiness to go around.

She edged the car out of the parking lot and drove to an exit, easing herself into the traffic that led back to the freeway. To her annoyance, she was forced to drive past the entrance to the freeway because it was blocked by new construction. The feeder road ran parallel to the freeway for a few miles and then turned in a sharp right away from it. She had no choice but to follow the road and soon she lost sight of the freeway altogether as she continued a forced detour that eventually led her to a small and alien town.

She remembered clearly that the freeway was to the left of her, but after turning and twisting through addled, narrow streets, she no longer knew if the freeway was to the left or right of her or if the freeway, in fact, had any bearing on her direction at all.

Abruptly, she felt as rootless as a grey frill unmooed from a dandelion gone to seed. She drove up avenues and down alleys and finally did not know in which direction she should go or from which direction she had come. But she was not worried.

I'm a hill on a valley in a forest with a gulf ...

The little song cascaded through her mind, giving her confidence and a destination. So long as she sang that song, she could never be lost.

The roadway grew wider, and the buildings more scattered, and soon, to her relief, she saw a freeway glittering off in the distance. She pressed harder on the accelerator, grateful that her little adventure at being lost was almost over. She had only to drive along the freeway and look for an exit to a subdivision with the word *forest* in it. But not just any forest! Her forest was an olde golde English forest with all-electric everthings!

She turned her car into the ramp of the freeway and drove by exits that pointed the way to tacky little subdivisions with names like El Dorado Estates. She drove faster and looked harder. She lived in a very special subdivision in a very special house ... on a valley ... in a forest ... with a gulf...

CLICK!

It was as if a camera had snapped inside her head, and an instant Polaroid picture developed. She saw the moment Tom had asked her to marry him.

The name of the game, he had said when he proposed, is that I'm on my way up and that means you up and leave when they tell you to and you don't look back. And someday, if you're bright and with-it and can fake out the opposition, you end up with it all, a big fat cat licking his whiskers. Do you think you can stand Success? If you can, come along with me!

She loved him, oh God, but she loved him! How strong and beautiful a man he was! The very thought of living out her life with him was enough to suffocate her with joy.

They had talked to each other at first, the talking even more important than the love-making that came with marriage, the kind of conversations that one might have with one's own soul. They would look trustingly into each other's eyes and tell each other everything. And then, miraculously, the other one would say, "Yes, yes, I know ..."

And really know.

A sign loomed up beside the freeway and she smiled with satisfaction. Replete with olde golde lettering, it read, NEXT EXIT TO COVENTRY FOREST.

She swung down the exit ramp, drove a little further and then, with a light thrust on the accelerator, she swooped into the charmingly landscaped entrance to Coventry Forest.

Truth to tell, she had not noticed upon her departure from the subdivision the founts of petunias and bowers of ivy that marked the entrance to Coventry Forest. However, she was still in the process of getting acquainted with her new home. Why, she thought with a certain self-deprecating amusement, she didn't even know which direction to turn in order to reach her street.

She shrugged and thrummed through the entrance and then began to cruise leisurely up one street and down the next with a sense of quiet conviction that she would be home, be home soon enough. Eventually, as if she had expected it, she came to a crossroad where the street sign read—HAPPY VALLEY.

Of course, Happy Valley! How could she have forgotten that the name of her street was Happy Valley? It was, it was such a happy name! But should she turn left or right on it? She turned left, thinking that if she were wrong, she had only to turn about and be right again. Slowly, she drove up and down the street looking for her house.

How wonderfully familiar the neighborhood seemed! There were the ranch, the Spanish, and the contemporary models, all of them set precisely on their mannered lawns of St. Augustine grass. Azaleas and mimosa trees grew everywhere, and hanging baskets of petunias brightened the front

doors to the homes.

Driving so slowly that she might have walked, she traveled the length of Happy Valley, up and down, down and up, looking for a dying magnolia tree on a front lawn and trying to remember ... oh, my God, what had they chosen *this* time? Had it been the ranch, the Spanish, or the contemporary?

She had lived in them all, lived in them all. A ranch in California, a colonial in Ponca City, a split in Baltimore, and a dipsy doodle in New Jersey. But she remembered vaguely that most of the time she preferred a house with a contemporary look.

With a sense of surprise she realized that, at some point and at some time when they had moved from one city to another, she had stopped noticing the exteriors of the homes in which she lived. It never really mattered what the outsides looked like. Inside, all the houses were the same. They all had the luxurious family rooms and the three wee bedrooms. And they always bought where the property values were going up.

**The road stretched straight
before her as taut as a nerve
before it snaps. And the sky,
the boundless sky, arched above
her, lit by an alien sun.**

She began to pay special attention to the contemporary facades on Happy Valley as she drove up and down, down and up. But not one of the contemporary houses had a dying magnolia tree in the front yard. Inevitably she was forced to an absurd conclusion. Silly, how really silly! She had been looking for her house in the wrong subdivision!

How she and Tom would laugh about that! What a marvelous story to tell new friends! What *howls* of laughter! She actually thought she lived in Coventry Forest when all the time she lived in—

Forest. She lived in a subdivision with the word *forest* in it, but what was the name of the forest?

Never mind. Never mind, never mind, never mind. She would find it. She would find her way back home to her very special husband and her very special son.

Oh God, they had moved and settled and moved again. How many times since they were married? Was it eight, ten, twelve times that they had bought

a house and signed a mortgage and shopped for drapes?

She rarely got lost, no matter how many times they moved, because she had a remarkable sense of direction. Why, she had often told dear friends in Baltimore/Seattle/Boston and points west/east/north-south about the automatic compass in her head, a compass that always pointed her way home.

She gunned the motor and swooped outside the gates of Coventry Forest—and was surprised to find herself on a different road than the one by which she had entered. There was no freeway in sight. There was only a long, straight road that ran and ran onward toward a flat horizon with such finality that one could not help but think that if one drove and drove along the road and did not stop in time, one might drive off the end of the world.

Panic nibbled at her nerves. She was alone and lost and without direction. It would not help for her to open her wallet and search for some identification. Her wallet said that she was someone who lived in Piscataway, New Jersey. With a sense of helplessness, she turned the car onto the long, flat road and for no particular reason drove left on it instead of right. Then she began to drive and drive under the enormous bowl of the sky through a rank, flat landscape that was parched with heat and cluttered with weeds.

But then the little song danced its way through her mind, cooling and refreshing her ... I'm a hill on a valley in a forest with a gulf ... I'm a hill on a valley in a forest with a gulf ...

So long as she could sing that song to herself, why then, she could never be lost.

CLICK!

It was her wedding night.

They were not virgins, but the very thought of making love legally for the first time in their lives was enough to make them innocent again. How shy they had been with each other! She remembered him in bed, waiting for her, while she slipped the soft cloth of her gown away from her body with trembling fingers. She had reached a hand out to the lamp, but he had said—"No, wait, I want to see you!"

Naked, she turned to him, aware that her body was like any other woman's body, perhaps somewhat larger there and smaller here. She understood all of her imperfections, and for the first time in her life, she knew that she was naked.

And he had said with wonder, "Oh, how beautiful you are! How very beautiful you are!"

He had only to put his arms around her and he defined her beauty.

She began to hum tunelessly, watching for anything that might look familiar by the road, the unfamiliar road that was bounded by unfamiliar things. Surely, she must come to a shopping center or a signpost or a—

But the road stretched straight before her as

taut as a nerve before it snaps. And the sky, the boundless sky, arched above her, lit by an alien sun. It was as if the road had no end and no beginning, just as she had no end and no beginning. All she knew about herself was that she was driving and driving upon an endless road, a road that would not stop and point to her destination.

She had begun to think that she would drive forever, adrift in a sea of weeds, but after a while, incredibly, a gas station loomed up in the distance. She stamped on the accelerator, almost afraid that if she did not hurry that the gas station would disappear.

But everything fell into its logical place. She swooped the car onto the smooth concrete of the station and parked beside the pumps with gratitude.

"Fill 'er up," she said to the small, old attendant, getting out of the car and going to the ladies' room to freshen up.

She patted her hair back into its proper shape and put fresh lipstick on and lingered, reassured by her reflection. She saw smart, anonymous sunglasses. Pink, pouty lips. She smiled with approval. Even she couldn't pick herself out of a lineup of housewives married to those special young executives who were On. The. Way. Up. Reassured, she strode back to her car.

"I'd appreciate it," she said to the gas station attendant, smiling a great smile, "if you could help me find my way home."

"Ma'am?" he asked politely, keeping his distance.

"I'm new here," she said, "and I've forgotten the name of the subdivision where I live. But, it's some kind of an English forest with its name written in gold letters. Do you know the subdivision I'm talking about?"

He slammed the hood down on her engine, and although he faced her, he rather seemed not to see her at all.

"Plenty of real fine subdivisions with English names," she said.

She waited for him to continue, but he merely shook his head as if he had forgotten that she was still there.

"The names," she prompted him. "Can you tell me their names?"

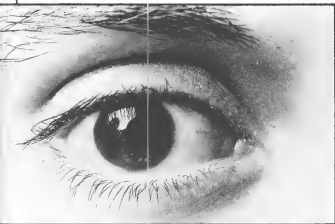
"Why," he said vaguely, "there's Camelot Forest and Kensington Forest and Buckminster Estates ..."

"I don't live in an estate, I live in a forest," she said. "And the name of my street has the word valley in it."

"Well," he said, "all the subdivisions have streets with the word valley in them. Like as not, there's Glen Valley, Meadow Valley, Happy Valley, Heather Valley ..."

"But," she said, "I'm not sure which one is mine."

"You got a husband, you call him," he advised.



"Now, in general, husbands know where they live."
"Oh, thank you!" she exclaimed gratefully. "I didn't think of that!"

"Phone's over there," he said, pointing to it. She picked up the phone book and flipped through the pages until she came to the listings of the companies whose names began with *Gulf*. She couldn't remember the rest of the name but, surely, she would see it spelled out on a page and—blam!—it would register with her.

But there were numerous listings of companies whose names began with *Gulf*. She could not even begin to guess which one he worked for. She closed the book slowly.

"Oh my God," she said, "I don't know where he works. Oh my God, oh my God, I don't know where he works."

"Well, ain't there someone at home?" he said. "Can't you call home and get directions?"

"Oh, now why didn't I think of that!" she said. "I'll call home, and my cleaning woman can give me directions."

She picked up the phone and then hesitated. "How stupid of me," she said. "I don't even know my own phone number. I've only lived there a week, you see."

He wetted a filthy rag and began to clean her windshield.

She knew he wanted her to leave. More than likely he had never met a woman before who didn't know where her husband worked and who couldn't even remember her own phone number. He probably thought she was lying or crazy.

Efficiently, she put the receiver to her ear and dialed information. She said to the operator in a low, well-modulated voice, "I'd like the phone number for ... for ..."

For a moment everything went blank. Not only had she forgotten the name of the company where her husband worked, but the name of her husband had slipped away from her. She remembered that he had brown hair and brown eyes and hated artichokes. The rest of him eluded her.

With a tremendous effort she managed to say,

"I'd like the phone number for Thomas Hill."

"Address?" came the impersonal request.

"He lives on a street with the word *valley* in it," she said, resting her cheek against the coolness of the receiver. She waited and waited, and then the operator said, "I have no Hill on a Valley."

"But you must," she argued, desperation uncoiling in her entrails. "I'm his wife, and I know for a fact that I live on a street with the word *valley* in it. Actually, we've lived there for a whole week ..."

"Sorry," the operator said, not sorry at all.

"Now look," she protested. "I know I have a phone. There *must* be a listing for a Thomas Hill on a Valley!"

"There is no Hill on a Valley," the operator said.

"Then check the new listings," she commanded. "We've only lived there a week."

"I've checked the new listings," the operator said.

"Let me talk to your supervisor," she snapped in an executive tone of voice, aware that the gas station attendant was staring at her as if he were hoping she would have her nervous breakdown at a service station further down the road.

He only did windshields.

The supervisor came on the line and informed her that there was no current listing for a Hill on a Valley.

She hung up.

And found that the gas station attendant was looking at her as if she really were crazy.

She laughed, pretending they were sharing a joke. "Well, well!" she said. "According to the phone company, I don't even exist!"

"That'll be seventeen dollars even," he said. "Your oil's fine."

"What?" she said.

"Seventeen dollars even," he repeated, avoiding her eyes. "For the gas."

"Actually," she confided to him, "I have *two* phones, a yellow one in the kitchen and a green Princess beside my bed."

"Seventeen dollars even," the gas station attendant said.

She paid him and drove away, reminding herself of the salient facts at hand.

Her name was Mrs. Thomas Hill.

She lived on a street with the word *valley* in it.

She lived in a subdivision named for an English forest.

Her husband worked for a company whose name began with *Gulf*.

With a sadness that surprised her, she became aware of how few things identified her. Back East she had known her own telephone number and Tom's office number. She even knew his extension number. Indeed, there was safety in numbers.

But now, if someone wanted to describe her to

a Missing Persons Bureau, what would they say?

In truth, she had admitted to herself at times with a secret, smug satisfaction, she was really like the women in the television commercials, the women who cleaned their bathrooms right down to the last germ and who shampooed their hair and their rugs every night. They were all attractive, intelligent, well-dressed women who said things like, "Jane, haven't you heard about the latest underarm deodorant that's also great for polishing floors?"

She swerved to the side of the road and cut off the engine, leaning her forehead against the unresponsive plastic of the wheel. Her head throbbed and the horizon wavered.

Was this what it was like to have a nervous breakdown?

No, she was not having a nervous breakdown. She was neither screaming nor driving a hundred miles a minute. She was sitting quietly in her car, tears sliding down her cheeks, holding her terror to a whimper.

She started the car up again and resumed her journey down the road, the road that pointed to a vague oblivion of weeds and billboards lit up by a garish picture-postcard sun.

Oh, she wanted to go home!

Perhaps it would help if she thought about Tom. The facts might begin to emerge. She might remember the name of the company where he worked, and then she would be able to call him up and say, laughingly ...

"Would you believe it, Tom, I'm so terribly lost! I keep driving and driving and looking for something that seems familiar, but I can't find anything that I can recognize and the phone company tells me that I don't even exist and I can't remember the name of your company so that I can call and tell you ..."

Her daydream came to an end. How could she call Tom and tell him that she did not know the name of his company when she didn't know the name of his company so that she could call and tell him that?

Think, she must think hard about Tom so that she could remember everything about him, and then the name of his company would come to her.

Like Roman candles, grand visions exploded inside her head and melted away. His proposal ... the honeymoon ... when Scott was born ...

The visions vanished.

Anxiously, she tried to remember Tom as he really was. What would they say about him if he were on the Ten Most Wanted List?

He was a hard worker. He left early in the morning and came home late at night. Many times, he would be gone for days and days. He would call home, and they would talk seriously about an improper billing or whether or not they could afford to reupholster the living room couch. Then she

would put Scott on the phone and he would say, "Hi, Daddy!"

Caressing the phone as if it were his father.

When Tom was home she would tell him about things that had happened to her. A surprise. A joke. A hurt.

And he would say ... yes, I know what you mean ... Even though he really didn't know what she meant anymore.

She kept on driving, her eyes fixed on the road, her hands clenched so tightly on the steering wheel that the bones of her knuckles glimmered through the taut skin.

And then!

From a great distance, she saw gay flags fluttering against the sky and sun glinting on shiny buildings. With a swell of joy, she pressed her foot on the accelerator. Her little car shot forward, bustling as fast as it could, to what became a mammoth shopping center with supermarkets and dress shops and discount shoe stores.

With growing confidence, she zipped past the shopping center that seemed identical to the one she had left in the morning and nodded to herself with satisfaction as she whisked by a billboard that read, NEXT EXIT TO CANTERBURY FOREST—EXECUTIVE ELEGANCE WITH ALL-ELECTRIC HOMES.

Of course, it was Canterbury Forest all the time! Now, Canterbury Forest really rang a bell!

Joyously, she swooped into the entrance of Canterbury Forest, past the fountains of petunias and bowers of ivy, and began to cruise leisurely up one street and down another with a quiet sense of conviction that she would be home, be home soon enough. But she drove cautiously now. It was late afternoon, and the children were out from school. Housewives visited with neighbors up and down the street. With a sense of civic responsibility, she inched around children and swerved around dogs.

Eventually, she arrived at a street named HAPPY VALLEY and turned into it. A surge of bliss enveloped her. How familiar it seemed! There were the ranch, the Spanish, and the contemporary, all of them precisely placed on their geometrically perfect green lawns of St. Augustine grass.

She was driving too quickly, too eagerly, and then suddenly she slammed on the brake, fighting the car to a nick-of-time stop. Her own son, Scott—or a child who might have been his twin—darted out of a driveway on a bicycle directly in front of her car. He heard the keen of her brakes and stopped and looked at her with a blank contempt on his face. Deliberately, he began to pedal down the street slowly as if daring her to run him down.

She turned the engine off with a trembling hand. She had almost killed a child. But the awful thing was, oh, the awful thing was that he might even have been Scott! With a great effort, she looked at the house from which the little boy had come. If there



were a dying magnolia tree in the front yard then it was Scott she had almost killed.

Thank God! There was no magnolia tree.

But how like Scott that little boy had been with his angel's fringe of long blond hair and his sulky, true-blue eyes!

Farther up the street, a woman stepped out of her contemporary house, her hair as lacquered and perfect as a painted fingernail. She rang the bell of the house next door. The door opened and another woman came into view, her hair teased into the shape of a blond angel cake. They went inside to a mysterious and intimate interior.

"That's what I need," she thought to herself. "I need a friend I can really talk to!"

She gunned the motor into action again and moved slowly along the street, down and up, up and down, pausing, searching, examining every house as carefully as a spy. All of them had clues, but none of them seemed quite right. The Spanish model had Irish lace curtains at the windows, and the contemporary model had colonial drapes. And not one of the houses had a young and dying magnolia tree on its front lawn.

No, she did not live in Canterbury Forest.

Meekly, she turned the car away from Happy Valley and traveled the convoluted streets until she was back at the flat scar of the road that led away. With surprise, for she felt quite calm, she saw that her hands were trembling. She pulled over to the side of the road and stopped the motor.

Really, my dear, there's no need to get hysterical, she told herself primly. After all, there are some facts left at hand.

Valley.

She lived on a street with the word *valley* in its name, although it was not a valley. It was a street in a subdivision where all the houses looked alike although they were really different if you really looked at them and all the people looked alike although they were really different if you really looked at them.

Happy Valley, Hidden Valley, Rudy Valley,

Glen Valley ...

CLICK!

She was in the third grade and Mrs. Moulton, was reading her poem out loud to the class. It made no sense at all, but her thoughts were like merry balloons that floated up to the sky, senseless and wonderful.

The sky is blue.

The grass is green.

The earth sits nicely in between.

Its hands and ears are scrubbed and clean.

Afterward, Mrs. Moulton had hugged her and whispered in her ear, "Oh, you are such a special little girl! Oh, please, don't forget how very special you are!"

Her hands were trembling.

Well then, it might help if she put fresh lipstick on and brushed her hair and sprayed her wrists with cologne. She always felt well, she used to tell her friends, if she looked well.

She flicked off her sunglasses and rummaged about in her pocketbook for her compact, which she found easily enough. She snapped it open and examined herself in the mirror.

Dear God, who was the stranger who looked back at her?

Her skin shone with perspiration, and her mouth, devoid of lipstick, was pinched and sexless. The lustrous eyeshadow she had applied so cleverly in the morning had become blurred and compacted into raddled wrinkles about her eyes. When she attempted to look into them, they became flat, furtive, and evasive discs, no more than the eyes of a stranger.

The stranger in the mirror was a rather nondescript woman with anonymous hair and a skin that needed moisturizing cream.

The beauty that she thought was hers had departed. Or was it that she had departed from those who had thought her beautiful?

She considered these alternatives for a moment, searching about for her lickery-slickery lipstick and thought about powdering her coarse-grained face.

And thought again.

Who the hell cared what she looked like at all?

Tired, she was so tired. Dear God, but she wanted to go home! Home to a hill on a valley in a forest with a gulf, a hill on a valley in a forest with a gulf ...

But that wasn't really home! Home was ... Home was ...

CLICK!

Tapioca pudding!

She was only five years old when Momma taught her how to make tapioca pudding. Together they had measured out spoonfuls of this and cupfuls of that and then stirred everything together beautifully. Momma cooked it on the big stove, and then

(continued on page 88)

GIVE US A BIG SMILE

*The kids want every toy on the shelf,
and all you've got is a pocket full of
lint. But there's nothing a big smile
can't cure. Almost nothing.*

by CHARLES L. GRANT

The season was fall, but it felt too much like winter; Thanksgiving, a week gone, could have happened last spring for all that remained now of Indian summer, turkeys in ovens, and short-lived decorations like cornstalks on the doors. There were Santas now and sprayed snow, strung lights in the store windows, strings of evergreen across the streets, and in front of the library a forty-foot tree that had been officially dedicated only the night before.

From hidden speakers over storefront doors and atop a red-and-white village van parked at the corner of Centre Street and the Pike came Christmas carols in such volume that everything was garbled, but no one seemed to care. Heads nodded in time, lips moved with the words, eager children dragged weary fathers to the windows to point—at the stuffed animals on the shelves, at the mechanical gnomes and working elves, at the dolls, the skates, the guns, the bikes, the board games just released and based on television shows and movies.

An hour of it, trudging back and forth along the sidewalk, taking elbows in the side and heels on frozen toes, feeling forehead and cheeks beginning to split with the cold, and Ron wished he had been born in a country that had never even heard of goodwill to all men.

He didn't think the sentiment made him more than remotely a Scrooge, and certainly no more cynical than most parents became this time of the year. But he couldn't help thinking that the storekeepers were after him, saw him coming with his credit cards, checkbook, and thick envelope from the bank, and were rubbing their hands gleefully at the sucker they saw. Prices were too high, the goods too shoddy, and Nature's First Law of

Children, he had said to his wife before the expedition began, guaranteed that the twins would want everything they saw that cost far more than he'd willingly spend, and definitely more than the budget would allow.

Neither Pam nor Sharon still believed in Santa Claus, having just this season transferred their nine-year, blind faith allegiance from the portly, white-bearded man to their slightly less portly and unbearded father. Not that it diminished their enthusiasm one bit. They pulled him hurriedly to this window to show him a doll, that window for the ice skates, and yet another for the removable-speaker radios that would probably break their backs as soon as they attempted to lift one. And he went with a tolerant grimace, with a warning not to expect too much, laughing when they pouted and promising with the laugh they'd lack for not a thing when they exchanged present-gossip with their friends when Christmas morning was over.

It was foolish because he knew he could barely afford it, but too often in the recent past he had had to skimp on their holiday because the money wasn't there. Hell, he had discovered, was waking up to listen to his children muffle their groans when they saw what they called yet another clothes-Christmas. Dresses, blouses, jeans, and coats that were needed much more than another record, far more than another stuffed toy. It wasn't much fun that their favorite time of the year had turned into a necessity instead of a lark.

But this year would be different. As long as he could keep his head above water once the bills were all in, they weren't going to be denied. Not by him. Not by anyone.

Not anymore.



BIG SMILE

"Dad!" Sharon said indignantly. "Are you listening or what?"

"Don't I always?" he said innocently, and was rewarded for the lie with a light punch to his hip.

With red-mittened hands she pointed out a combination radio and tape deck, suggesting that finding a sterling prize like that under the tree would somehow miraculously result in dinner dishes being washed for eternity, if not longer.

Pamela shook her head and pushed her glasses back up the length of her red-tipped nose. "If we get that," she said sternly, "we'll never get the tv."

"Who needs it?" her sister said. "We've already got one."

Pam looked up at her father, her expression asking him to have patience with the child. "That's Mom's and Dad's," she argued. "If we get one, we don't have to watch what they do, right?" A tug on his hand. "Just a little one, Dad. It doesn't even have to be color."

"Well, thank you," he said, pulling away from the store to the curb. "I appreciate your concern for my checkbook."

She giggled, Sharon groaned, and they stood there waiting for the traffic to clear.

And in that moment, that one brief moment of peace in all the madness, he saw the smiles.

They shouldn't have bothered him, but they did.

The policeman at the intersection, waving at foot and automobile traffic, turning his head just enough for Ron to see the smile, directed at him; the two old women in worn fur coats pulling their present-filled shopping carts behind them, hesitating at the curb and turning their heads just enough for Ron to see their smiles, directed at him; the young man dashing out of the Melody Record Shop, stopping dead in his tracks, juggling an awkward package, and turning his head. To grin.

They were obviously pleased at the good humor he showed with his laugh, his own smile, his greetings to others. But he couldn't help thinking that somewhere underneath, they were feeling sorry for him, pitying him, and the thought made him scowl. They, like his wife, thought the children were spoiled.

Then Pamela said: "Hey, c'mon, Dad, don't be so glum. Give us a smile, huh? Won't you give us a big smile?"

He started, not realizing his expression had gone solemn, blinked slowly when he heard the familiar phrase, his phrase for their sorrow and for skinned knees and elbows, being cast back at him.

He nodded, loosened his grip on the girls' hands, and gave them what she asked.

Sharon giggled, looked at her sister, and suddenly pulled him into the street, had him dodging a honking station wagon and a swerving delivery truck to the other side, had him red-faced and

ready to scold when, once safe, they threw their arms around him and caught him in a hug.

He was a sucker for hugs, an absolute sucker. For the feel of their strength around his waist, the flow of their love that kept him going.

"Don't," he said, "ever do that again." But it was said with a soft voice they readily ignored, choosing instead to press their cheeks against his worn winter coat and hug him more tightly.

"We won't be hurt, Dad," Pamela whispered.

"No, we won't," Sharon agreed.

"I know," he whispered back, "but you have to watch out all the same. There are lots of people out here who don't know how it is. They wouldn't understand what it's like with us."

Pedestrians passed and nodded, a woman with a squalling child of her own pressed her lips together, covetous of the affection displayed so boldly in broad daylight. He winked at her and gently pulled himself free, bent down, and suggested to the girls that they best head on home before their mother decided they had run off to the Himalayas.

"Where's that?" Sharon asked.

"Over there," Pamela told her, waving an arm toward the east. "They're mountains, dummy."

"I know that. I just didn't know where they were."

For the next block, then, Ron listened to them arguing about how much each knew. It was comforting in its predictability, soothing in its cadence. For as long as they could talk, they had been battling with each other, one attempting to pull the other out of the mire of ignorance. Very seldom was he asked to moderate; when they couldn't agree to disagree, they either went to the children's encyclopedia they had in their room, or they pulled out their fists and settled it with blood.

A right turn, and they were in shadow. Cold shadow that held December tightly; he hunched his shoulders, making him drop their hands so he could button his coat high to his neck. The sun was nearly gone over the houses across the way, their faces beginning to sprout signs of the first of the coming night's lamps.

He slowed.

The girls ran ahead.

A patrol car crawled past, the driver leaning over the seat to stare at him, and grin.

Ron looked away, unease twitching at his lips, pulling at his temples, curling his fingers to dig at his palms.

Please leave me alone, he told the cop silently; leave me alone, it wasn't my fault. She wouldn't listen when I told her all I wanted was a big—

"Daddy, hurry up! C'mon, hurry up!"

"I'm coming, I'm coming."

"Now, Daddy! We want you now!"

God, he thought, how I love those kids.

There were wreaths on the doors, a huge

sleigh, and reindeer pulling Santa in one yard, and as he turned into his own gate he paused and watched the girls racing each other along the porch. Snow would have made the picture too perfect for comfort—an old house like all the others, large and filled with windows, topped with a slate roof and chimney, white picket fence backed by shrubbery now brown until spring; it was incredible, unbelievable, that a simple man like he could have a place like this, with the mortgage paid off and the salary finally used for better things.

Pamela tripped and slammed into the railing, her face suddenly twisting into the threat of a wail. Sharon immediately put her arms around her and held her until she decided this wasn't a time for crying.

A secret smile for himself, and he hurried up the walk, slapping his gloved hands together to bring them some warmth as he opened the door and stepped in, closed and locked the door behind him, and wondered what Pat would have in store for him today.

The foyer was small, and it led directly down a short hallway into the kitchen. As he flung his coat and scarf onto the rack by the door, he took a deep breath, smelled ham in the oven, and smacked his lips loudly.

"Home!" he yelled.

In the kitchen, a stirring.

He hesitated, felt a chill, and told himself he was being foolish. There was nothing to worry about, everything was fine.

It wasn't his fault that he loved his family so much.

He went in, deliberately averting his gaze from the dark splotches on the wall beside the staircase, and forced himself to ignore the dishes piled unwashed in the sink, the half-empty cartons and open tins scattered along the counters. Instead, he waited until his wife turned away from the back door, her short brown hair covered with a kerchief, her coat tossed onto the pine table, her gloves on the floor.

"Hi there," he said gaily.

Pat watched him for a moment, her hands opening out of clenched fists, and then she smiled sadly. "You're back?"

He spread his arms. "Aren't we always?"

There was a pause before she nodded, and gestured vaguely toward the mess. "I was out shopping."

"I can see that."

Her chest rose and fell in an effort to breathe normally. "It's hard, Ron, you know? It's really hard."

"I can understand that. I just hope you didn't spend too much."

A frown made him wish he hadn't said that, but it was too late. She grabbed her gloves, cradled the coat in her arms, and stalked out of the room.



He waited. She returned a few minutes later and ran water over the dishes, steaming to fog the windows over the sink.

"It's a beautiful day," he said, suddenly nervous.

"I was out there, remember?"

"Oh. Right."

Plates slammed, a frying pan broke a glass, a fork slipped from her hand and skittered across the floor. He made to retrieve it and she said, "Leave it be, okay? Just ... leave it be!"

This, he thought, was no way to start an evening, not on a day like today, not so close to Christmas. Didn't she realize, hadn't she ever realized, how much he loved her and the children? What would it take for her to understand, really understand, that everything he did he did for them?

"Ron," she said wearily, "will you please go away?"

He almost did. He almost believed her when he saw the pain in her eyes, pain without even a hint of resignation. Then he knew she had to be kidding, the way she always did when she was annoyed with him. She never wanted him to just ... go away. That was temper talking, emotions she couldn't control whenever she was tired of working, scrimping, listening to him tell her how things were going to be when things were better. So he walked up behind her and cupped his hands on her waist. "Hey, c'mon, give us a smile, huh?"

She stiffened, though her hands continued to plow through the suds, the plates, the broken glass.

(continued on page 109)

THE DOCTOR & THE DEVILS

Freddie Francis Finds Faust—In a Dylan Thomas Crypt

by JAMES VERNIERE

Freddie Francis would be horrified.

Call his latest project for Twentieth Century-Fox, *The Doctor and the Devils*, a horror film, and Francis is quick to point out that the author of the screenplay, poet Dylan Thomas, is hardly your average terror merchant. "I think it is safe to say that Thomas was not a horror addict," Francis said in a recent interview.

In fact, Francis, director of such Hammer-esque fare as *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave* (1968), *Tales from the Crypt* (1972), and *Legend of the Werewolf* (1974), shunned the horror stigma so strenuously that he did not direct for a decade.

"I gave up directing in those days because I had been pigeonholed as a man who only made horror films," said Francis, whose credentials as a cinematographer then included such classic English neo-Realist films as *Room at the Top* (1959) and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960). More recently, he was behind the camera on *The Elephant Man* (1980), *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1981), and *Dune* (1984).

Francis's protests notwithstanding, *Devils* has its gory fascination.

The story focuses on a nineteenth-century anatomist who puts his career in jeopardy when he resorts to the services of two "resurrectionists," the ironic term for grave robbers who supplied physicians with fresh cadavers.

Thomas drew from several sources: James Birdie's play *The Anatomist* and a story by Donald Taylor. These, in turn, were based on the actual celebrated case of two enterprising Irish émigrés in Edinburgh, William Burke and William Hare, who discovered the value of corpses and turned to murder for profit.

They sold their victims, perhaps as many as fifteen, all of them poor, to the Edinburgh School of Anatomy physician Robert Knox, who reportedly paid £7.10s for each "subject." Although the bodies bore no trace of physical violence (Burke and Hare smothered their victims), public opinion, fueled by an outraged press, determined that Knox must have known his subjects were murder victims.

Science itself was put on trial. Eventually, Hare turned state's evidence. Burke was hanged, and Dr. Knox was vilified, reduced, according to one report, to "lecturing in a circus in Leicester Square, London."

It just might succeed in bridging the gulf between sensationalism and art.

It's not surprising then that *The Doctor and the Devils* has more than a little in common with the Val Lewton-produced *The Body Snatcher*, a 1945 film (in which Boris Karloff plays a murderous coachman) inspired by a story of Robert Louis Stevenson's based on the same case.

But in Dylan Thomas's script the chief focus is on the doctor—not as a "mad scientist" in the B-movie sense but as a man of science whose quest for knowledge leads him to trespass the laws of God and society. In that sense, Thomas's story of the doctor's fall can also be traced back to both

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and other variations of the Faust myth.

In fact, the Faustian connection is particularly apt. In *The Doctor and the Devils*, the Faust figure is Dr. Rock, an Edinburgh vivisectionist who is young, brilliant, and fatally ambitious. Convinced that science is above the law, he is the archetypal modern man of science, a strict materialist to whom the human heart is not the seat of love but "an elaborate physical organ," and to whom the soul, because it cannot be found, "does not exist."

He is also, it should be noted, a loving husband and father capable of considerable charm and wit. "I don't need friends," he remarks upon hearing that he is the scandal of his conservative colleagues. "I prefer enemies. They are better company."

All this has been kept pretty much intact in the filming. Originally, Freddie Francis had planned to make the movie for American television as a tribute to Dylan Thomas. But then Mel Brooks, whose production company Brookfilms also created *The Elephant Man*, stepped in. According to Francis, "Mel loved the script and was adamant that we retain as much of the original as we could. We did have to make some changes, but they do not detract from the Dylan Thomas original."

The changes that were made to update the script, the deletion of two montage sequences and several interior monologues, were done by Ronald Harwood, who won an Oscar for *The Dresser*. "But anyone familiar with the Thomas script," says Francis, "won't be surprised by what Ronnie has done."

Francis particularly wanted to maintain the poet's depiction of both the poverty of nineteenth-century Edinburgh and the scientist's labora-



Timothy Dalton (seated) as the doctor, Stephen Rea (left) and Jonathan Pryce (right) as his 'resurrectionists.'

tory, with its descriptions of marketplace "stalls that sell rags and bones, kept by rags and bones," and of Rock and a colleague "surrounded by bones and bodies, like men in a spilt graveyard."

To capture these squalid conditions, the filmmakers built elaborate sets at Shepperton Studios, inspired by the works of the English painter William Hogarth and the French illus-

trator Gustave Doré. "People who've seen the film," attests Francis, "say the atmosphere is so thick you can smell it."

Like *The Elephant Man*, *The Doctor and the Devils* goes light on the "stars." The all-British cast includes Timothy Dalton as Dr. Thomas Rock, Jonathan Pryce as one of the murderous "resurrectionists," and Twiggy as a charming prostitute caught be-

tween the killers and her lover, an upper-class doctor who assists the cadaver-crazed Rock.

Described by the studio as a "gothic thriller," *The Doctor and the Devils* will require careful marketing if it is not going to be lost in the shuffle of current Hollywood fare. But again like *The Elephant Man*, it just might succeed in bridging the gulf between sensationalism and art. ■

A Show-by-Show Guide to

Rod Serling's

NIGHT GALLERY

by KATHRYN M. DRENNAN
and J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI

*Continuing our exclusive guide to the series that carried on
the "Twilight Zone" tradition—complete with Rod Serling's opening narrations.*

The artistic freedom that comes with producing an anthology tv series can be at once a blessing and a curse, as those involved with *Night Gallery* soon discovered. Without continuing stories, characters, actors, or sets, each segment of *Night Gallery* had to be built almost from scratch on a limited budget, a feat that demanded not only innovation but a few necessary compromises.

For art director Joe Alves and unit manager Burt Astor, the two men most responsible for getting the sets designed and built on time and within budget, *Night Gallery's* second season was a wild scramble. When production was in full swing, recalls Alves, "I did sometimes twenty-five sets a week, and I had two decorating teams and a lot draughtspeople going."

The process would start with producer Jack Laird giving them scripts to read, "even before directors were assigned, to see if they were possible to make," according to Astor. If the scripts made it past that first obstacle, Astor explained, then the planning and building of needed sets and props started immediately, "weeks before we actually shot the episode. This was unheard of in television. We weren't even budgeted yet on some of the shows."

Once directors were assigned, Alves consulted with each of them, "to

discuss their views and then to show them what I could do with the existing time and budget."

For a script like "The Academy," which demanded a realistic approach, that meant actually going to the Harvard School on Coldwater Canyon, not far from the Universal lot, where director Jeff Corey could film the stark angles, small rooms, and walls-within-walls needed to underline the segment's theme.

"Marmalade Wine," on the other hand, was shot entirely on a soundstage of surrealistic sets designed by Alves and director Jerrold Freedman. In lieu of a forest, they used blatantly artificial, stark white trees, while for the room, they designed a set that only suggested walls, a lattice-work of wood and shadow that bled off into infinity. Then Freedman enhanced this experimental-theater look with master shots of the whole set.

Officially, each hour of *Night Gallery* was budgeted equally. But Alves and Astor could, with Laird's blessing, reallocate funds for individual segments as needed. If one segment called for extremely complicated sets, Alves funneled what money he could into that segment and found ways to re-use existing sets for simpler vignettes.

Though Universal frowned on this sort of juggling, in the long run it



Rod Serling

saved the studio money. Astor recalls that by the time they finished making, mixing, and matching all the individual segments and putting them into one-hour formats, "we had officially shot twenty-one hours, but we had enough footage—enough complete stories—to make twenty-two. It was another thing for bookkeeping that drove the studio crazy."

Because a whole new set of actors was needed for each segment, and because the best *Night Gallery* segments were essentially one-act plays

that explored characters and themes in ways unusual for tv, Laird and his directors could also do creative casting. Furthermore, the dramatic and thematic range of the series attracted many performers who normally shunned television.

Among them was celebrated stage and film actress Kim Stanley, who gave a quirky and most fascinating performance of a spurned woman gaining revenge in "A Fear of Spiders." And for "Marmalade Wine," director Jerrold Freedman reunited Robert Morse and Rudy Vallee, who had starred together on Broadway in *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. Over its three seasons, the gallery also included Edward G. Robinson, Cornell Wilde, Louis Hayward, Rachel Roberts, and Barbara Steele.

Although actors were usually chosen by Jack Laird, the Universal casting directors, the directors of each segment, and the Powers That Be at Universal and NBC, whenever possible Laird let directors have whom they wanted. This produced problems, not all of them entirely serious.

Example: The casting choice of Theodore J. Flicker (famous for his film *The President's Analyst*) for "Junior," a blackout dealing with one of the drawbacks of the Frankenstein story not mentioned by Mary Shelley. "My wife played the wife in the segment," said Flicker, "and they were going to cast a Rock Hudson-type in the other role—some stud to play the guy in bed with my wife. I said, 'Oh, no, sweetheart—you're not getting into bed with any big, famous stud, you're just not.' So I got Wally Cox, which amused the hell out of everybody."

Jeff Corey's suggestion for the lead in "The Academy," on the other hand, was met not with amusement but utter disbelief. To portray the self-involved, cold-hearted father, Corey demanded that symbol of sunny smiles and milk, Pat Boone. Corey got his way. Boone's performance is disturbing.

But the directing, acting, and design of the show, no matter how well chosen, meant nothing without the scripts. And *Night Gallery*, with its multi-segment format, reeled a lot of them very quickly if the production schedule was to be met. This meant often harrowing deadlines and some mixed results.

The "Junior" blackout was written by frequent *Night Gallery* contributor Gene Kearney (Laird's close friend and unofficial staff writer). However,

Laird, who loved his blackouts (and even went so far as to write a role for himself—as the laboratory assistant in "With Apologies to Mr. Hyde,") wrote most of them himself.

The majority of *Night Gallery*'s longer scripts came from two sources: a variety of writers' adaptations of short stories and Rod Serling's own pen. According to Gerald Sanford, second-season story editor, Laird "would buy a lot of books and say 'Take this one, do that one. This is a great idea, go run with it. When can you have the script in?' Sometimes we'd get three or four assignments a day."

Writers were given considerable freedom with the stories to meet these deadlines. Sometimes they also took casting into consideration. Jerrold Freedman, for one, rewrote Joan Aiken's story "Marmalade Wine" specifically as a vehicle for stars Vallee and Morse.

"They really messed up in recutting. They did some really jerky stuff."

Other stories had to be substantially rewritten because their subtleties did not translate easily to television. "Since Aunt Ada Came to Stay," adapted by Alvin Sapinsley from A. E. van Vogt's short story "The Witch" (1942), suffered just such a fate. A quietly horrifying tale, the short story relies on exposition and interior monologues. But alas, because this would have been difficult to convey in twenty minutes of television, "Aunt Ada" leans too heavily on a feeble prop—a green carnation that just happens to be on hand for the climactic sequence.

Rod Serling, in addition to writing original scripts, also did a number of adaptations. But he made a great effort to preserve the original plot, tone, and even dialogue of those stories, perhaps because, unlike other NG writers, he was permitted to choose the tales and liked what they had to say.

Serling's adaptation of Elizabeth Walker's "The Spider," for instance,

follows the original pretty closely. The character of the landlord was added for purposes of exposition, but it is written with wit and doesn't seem like a screenwriter's device. Although the episode does fall apart with the introduction of the giant spider, this is through no fault of Serling's. The spider, the mere size of a cat in the short story, grew to Doberman proportion in Universal's special effects department, and the result is spectacularly unconvincing.

"The Academy," based on an award-winning short story by David Ely, represented the kind of story Serling wanted to see more of on *Night Gallery*. "A wonderful statement," according to Jeff Corey, "about how we have children before we know what to do with them—the *in extremis* of putting kids on hold," it was part of Serling's attempt to get away from the monsters-out-of-the-closet stories that the network began to push for as the second season wore on. At that point, the network wanted, in Serling's words, "Mammy in a graveyard"—referring to *Night Gallery*'s main competition on Wednesday nights.

Shows like "The Academy," made Serling, as he described it later, "*persona non grata* on the show." His phone calls were not returned. His favorite scripts were rejected. And he grew more and more disgruntled about having his name on a show over which he had no creative control.

Serling grew understandably dissatisfied. And yet, in spite of that second season's many problems, there were any number of memorable evenings of television still to come for viewers of *Night Gallery*.

SYNDICATION NOTES

"The Flip Side of Satan" was an unusually tight segment, even for *Night Gallery*. This one-character, one-set piece about a conscienceless disc jockey was short, to the point and reasonably amusing.

But the version of "Flip Side of Satan" seen in syndication is tedious indeed. Universal almost doubled the running time by adding footage of a car driving to the station, senseless shots of a woman being run down by a horse-drawn carriage, and faces that loom out of every corner while dialogue is repeated over and over again needlessly.

An angry Freedman sums up: "They really messed up in recutting. They did some really jerky stuff."

NIGHT GALLERY

SINCE AUNT ADA CAME TO STAY

Broadcast September 29, 1971

Teleplay by Alvin Sapinsley, based on
the short story "The Witch" by
A. E. van Vogt

Directed by William Hale

Craig Lowell (James Farentino), Joanna Lowell (Michele Lee), Nicholas Porteus (Jonathan Harris), Aunt Ada (Jeanette Nolan), Frank Heller (Eldon Quick), Cemetery Caretaker (Charles Seel), Housekeeper (Alma Platt), Messenger Boy (Arnold Turner)

For those of you who've never met me, you might call me the undernourished Alfred Hitchcock. The great British craftsman and I do share something in common: an interest in the oddball, a predilection toward the bizarre. And this place is nothing if it isn't bizarre, by virtue of the paintings you see hanging around me. This item here is called "Since Aunt Ada Came to Stay," and Aunt Ada is a most memorable character. You may not like her, but I seriously doubt if you'll ever forget her. Be thankful you've only met here in the Night Gallery.

Each morning, as elderly Aunt Ada watches from her upstairs window, Joanna Lowell sends her science-professor husband Craig off to work with a kiss on the cheek and a green carnation, picked from her garden. Such carnations, he's told by Professor Porteus, specialist in matters metaphysical, are potent weapons against witches when burned in their presence.

That night, Craig awakens to find Joanna downstairs, where Aunt Ada is brewing some of her special herb tea. Craig surreptitiously pockets some of the tea and later takes it to Frank Heller, campus chemist. The substance is a harmless seaweed, known in folklore as "Witches' Weed."

Porteus is happy to elaborate: "Witches' Weed" is used by an aging witch who has used up her present body and wishes now to possess a younger one. The tea is administered to the victim in regular, small doses until the first full moon following the autumnal equinox. Then, at the twelfth stroke of midnight, the transference takes place. And the green carnation is the only weapon that can prevent this.

Craig refuses to believe any of



James Farentino and Michele Lee

this, until he discovers that the real Aunt Ada died six months earlier. He rushes home to confront the imposter, only to discover that she is indeed a witch with powers he never imagined. She conjures up multiple images of herself to surround and frighten him. Sure he can do nothing to harm her, the witch calmly returns to her room.

In desperation, Craig calls Porteus, but Ada casts a spell that strikes Porteus with a stroke just as the phone rings. With no one else to turn to, Craig tells his story to Joanna, who does not believe him. Nevertheless, to comfort him, she agrees to accompany him to his evening class. It is the night that the transference is supposed to take place.

Shortly before midnight, a spell

that Ada casts entrances Joanna. She slips out of the class and drives home. Craig follows on foot, through pouring rain, and finds the two just as the clock begins to strike twelve. Overpowered by the witch's magic, he recalls Porteus's words and ignites the green carnation. A pillar of flame engulfs the witch, yet she continues to chant her spell through the remaining tolls of the clock. Then with a scream, she dissolves into ash. Craig rushes to Joanna and comforts her. It's over.

The next morning, Joanna cheerily sends her husband off to work. Going back to the house, she passes the row of green carnations—and looks strangely uneasy. She pulls her collar closer about her and hurries into the house.

WITH APOLOGIES TO MISTER HYDE

Broadcast September 29, 1971
 Teleplay by Jack Laird
 Directed by Jeannot Szwarc

Mr. Hyde (Adam West), Laboratory Assistant (Jack Laird)



Adam West

A hunchbacked lab assistant mixes fluids from beaker to beaker then hands the result to a well-dressed gentleman waiting beside him. The gentleman drinks—then writhes as his form changes, as his assistant eagerly watches. The metamorphosis complete, he looks in the mirror. "Well," the assistant asks, "what do you think, Master?" Snarling, Hyde turns from the mirror and says, "If I've told you once, I've told you a hundred times: go easy on the vermouth!"

THE FLIP SIDE OF SATAN

Broadcast September 29, 1971
 Teleplay by Malcolm Marmorstein and Gerald Sanford; story by Hal Dresner
 Directed by Jerrold Freedman

J. J. Wilson (Arte Johnson)

We refer to him by different names: Lucifer, Mephistopheles, Beelzebub. But by any other name he'd smell of brimstone. Those, the ingredients to a one-man stew: a disc jockey, a radio show, and a painting we call "The Flip Side of Satan."

J. J. Wilson, once a "boss" disc jockey in New York City, arrives at KAPH to begin his new job—and he

is dismayed. KAPH is a tiny 5000-watt station in the middle of nowhere that only broadcasts from midnight to six a.m. But J. J. fires up the power and with the boast "Who's better than J. J.?" launches into his top-forty patter. He pops the first record from KAPH's playlist onto the turntable, a record labeled only with a number indicating proper sequence.

Instead of rock, the sound of pipe organs fills the control room with somber, dirge-like music. As the record spins, J. J. calls his agent, Sid, to complain. The conversation shifts to Sid's wife, Emily, who, shortly before J. J.'s hurried departure, went mad and suffered an... accident. Sid accuses J. J. of having had an affair with her that tipped her over the edge. J. J. emphatically denies it, explaining that he was fishing with a friend those weekends Emily was away. J. J. hangs up as the record ends.

More patter, another unlabeled record, and music even stranger. J. J. calls his friend and reminds him of their supposed fishing trips together, in case Sid should call. J. J. feels no remorse, claiming that if not for him, Emily probably would've flipped and killed herself sooner. After assuring his friend that he hasn't skipped town to skip out on the money he owes him, J. J. hangs up.

As the music grows increasingly

ominous, a voice suddenly emanates from the speakers, invoking the spirits of darkness by name, inviting them to a sacrifice. Convinced someone is playing a joke on him, J. J. replaces the record with one of his own, by the Karmas. But his record contains the same strange music and voice, which now proclaims: "The condemned has entered the crucible from which there is no escape." J. J. rips the record off the turntable; however, the musical conjuration continues.

J. J. rushes to the door. The handle comes off in his hand. He tries the phone. Out of order. "The Prince of Darkness will receive the condemned," the voice says. J. J. backs into a wall, beneath a row of photographs of KAPH's previous D.J.'s—all of whom served only one night. The voice orders the condemned to humble himself. J. J. grabs the power switch, ready to shut the whole place down. "J. J. humbles himself before no one," he says as he throws the switch, "because he's J. J. Wilson, and who's better than..."

J. J. Wilson glows a bright electric blue as thousands of volts arc from the switch through his body.

And there is a new photograph on the wall beneath the sign that says, "The Management salutes these D.J.'s for making KAPH what it is today"—J. J. Wilson's photograph.



Arte Johnson

NIGHT GALLERY

A FEAR OF SPIDERS

Broadcast October 6, 1971

Teletype by Rod Serling, based on the short story "The Spider" by Elizabeth Walter

Directed by John Astin

Justus (Patrick O'Neal), Elizabeth (Kim Stanley), Mr. Boucher (Tom Pedi)

Good evening. We welcome you to this palladia of art treasures that range from the kooky to the uncommon, from the bestial to the bizarre. And I'd like to take you on a guided tour through the Night Gallery—a collection of paintings on display for only the most discriminating because it's best that they be seen both after and in the dark. The story behind this offering: a word which we've coined just for the occasion—arachnidophobia. It means, for our purposes, a special distaste for those crawly little beasties with the multi-legged hairy bodies. In other words, "A Fear of Spiders," the title of our first painting in this, the Night Gallery.



Patrick O'Neal

Justus, a writer/reviewer, is frantically trying to meet his deadline in the midst of phone calls from Elizabeth, who lives in the apartment upstairs. Finally she comes to his door, looking weary with red-rimmed eyes. His lack of interest in their relationship is destroying her. But Justus insists there is no relationship. He took her out a few times as a courtesy to a neighbor, nothing more. Then he slams the door on her. He's a cruel monster, she calls to him. She prays that someday he will be helpless and in need of someone.

Returning to his work, he finds that another distraction awaits him: the kitchen faucet, dripping loudly. He

reaches for the faucet and discovers a small spider in the sink. Gingerly, he washes it down the drain and goes back to work. But the dripping is back again. He returns to the sink: the spider has crawled out, unaccountably larger. He grabs for a towel and turns back again; the spider is larger still, nearly as large as his palm. He stuffs it down the drain, letting the water run a good, long time.

When Mr. Boucher, the landlord, shows up to fix a faulty thermostat, Justus informs him that now there are spiders loose—big ones, probably poisonous. Boucher pays the frantic Justus only peripheral attention, enjoying his tenant's predicament. Justus demands an exterminator. Boucher tells him it's too late in the evening. Live with 'em, Boucher says. But Justus can't—spiders unnerv him, terrify him. Boucher isn't sympathetic and leaves, promising sarcastically to send the spiders an eviction notice first thing in the morning.

Alone now, Justus hears a squealing noise from behind his closed bedroom. He inches the door open and finds inside a spider the size of a large dog. He slams the door and rushes upstairs. He has no one to turn to except Elizabeth. He tries to pretend he is just there to apologize, but Elizabeth soon gets him to admit the truth.

She disbelieves his story of a dog-sized spider, and is contemptuous of this transparent attempt to use her so soon after rejecting her. No, he may not stay in her apartment, but she will at least go with him to see if it's still there.

She finds nothing in the kitchen, living room, or bedroom. She invites him to see for himself. He steps into the room. The door slams and locks behind him. On the other side, Elizabeth ignores the pounding and his insistence that the spider might still be there. He needs her help. She throws his words of rejection back at him. This will teach him a lesson, help him understand women and what they need: gentleness, a little love. She promises to come down in the morning and let him out.

Then, from behind the door, a squealing "It's in here!" Justus cries, clawing at the door as he dissolves into hysteria. Elizabeth, lost in her own thoughts, doesn't seem to notice when the pleas from the other room cease after one last cry of terror. She simply leaves, gently shutting the door behind her.

JUNIOR

Broadcast October 6, 1971

Teletype by Gene Kearney

Directed by Theodore J. Flicker

Father (Wally Cox), Mother (Barbara Flicker), Junior (Bill Svanoe)



Wally Cox

A couple, asleep in bed, is awakened by a small child's cry for a glass of water. The man tries to rouse his wife, but she only rolls over and says, "He's your baby." Sleepily, the man stands, gets the glass of water, and staggers into the other bedroom, where a crib stands in the center of the room. After he hands his child the water and a teddy bear and heads back to bed, we see that Junior bears a suspicious resemblance to the Frankenstein monster and is well over six feet tall. It thanks its daddy, then proceeds to splash the water on its head and throw the glass on the floor, looking perfectly content.

MARMALADE WINE

Broadcast October 6, 1971

Teletype by Jerrold Freedman, based on the short story by Joan Aiken
Directed by Jerrold Freedman

Roger Blacker (Robert Morse), Dr. Francis Deeking (Rudy Vallee)

Painting number two in the Night Gallery: we call it "Marmalade Wine." Look at it if you will with gentle and restrained eyes; the way you look at a maniac in the woods because that's the story it tells. Hold out your glasses and get ready for a very special nightcap.

Roger Blacker, rain-drenched and hopelessly lost in a surreal forest,

searches for a place of light and finds it. A stranger with an umbrella comes down and escorts him to his odd-looking home. His name is Dr. Francis Deeking, whom Blacker recognizes as a world-famous surgeon. Asked who he is, Blacker replies that he is a photojournalist, though he is plainly unfamiliar with the simplest camera.

Deeking brings out some home-made marmalade wine. They drink and talk. Blacker, getting tipsy, spins stories about himself, while trying to remember just what it was that he'd recently read about the good doctor. When Blacker claims to be able to tell the future, Deeking excitedly asks Blacker to pick a winning horse from a racing form, which Blacker does. Deeking rushes out to place a phone-bet.

Blacker, woozy, tries to stand. All these lies—he *should* apologize. He just wishes he could remember what he'd read. But then Deeking returns, pleased. The bet has been placed; now, who does Blacker say will win tonight's election? Blacker reluctantly picks a name and even the margin of the win, just before the wine finally gets to him....

Blacker awakens in bed, his feet sore beneath the blankets. He has to get rid of those darned boots, he mutters, hung-over, as Deeking enters with a breakfast tray. Blacker confesses the lie, but Deeking is unaffected. Both predictions came absolutely true. Deeking insists he stay for a while,

and could he make some predictions on the stock market? Blacker complies, and Deeking rushes out to call his broker.

Then Blacker finally remembers what he'd read. Deeking had gone mad and was barred from practicing medicine. The doctor returns and repeats his offer that Blacker stay with him for a while—an offer that Blacker will be hard-pressed to refuse. After explaining that during the night he amputated Blacker's feet, Deeking says once again that he hopes Blacker will stay for a long, long time.

THE ACADEMY

Broadcast October 6, 1971

Teleplay by Rod Serling, from the short story by David Ely

Directed by Jeff Corey

Mr. Holston (Pat Boone), Director (Leif Erickson), Sloane (Larry Linville), Drill Instructor (Ed Call), Bradley (Stanley Waxman), Gatekeeper Simmons (Robert Gibbons), Chauffeur (E.A. Sirrianni), Cadet (John Gruber)

A small item for the pedagogues amongst you, a little something to be found in the drawer alongside the old school ties. Picture if you will a very special school where the students don't matriculate but rather are marooned; where the scholars are not enrolled but rather are sentenced. The painting is called "The Academy."

A long, sleek limousine bearing Mr. Holston arrives at the Glendale Academy. In front is a statue of a man, one arm around a boy's shoulders, the other pointing toward the Academy. Everywhere Holston looks, cadets are marching and drilling under the command of harsh drill instructors.

Ushered into the director's office to discuss the enrollment of his son, Holston is questioned about the boy, a troublemaker, bright but undisciplined, and about his wife. The director knows all about her and her boating accident with the boy. There were rumors at the time, but the director isn't interested in rumors. His only concern is getting the information needed to plan the boy's curriculum.

There will be no home visits for the first year. Parents can visit, but it's vital to make the cadet a part of the community. He takes Holston on a tour of the academy, and Holston



Pat Boone

notices that many of the cadets are considerably older than he had expected. One cadet appears to be in his thirties.

Stopping beside the statue, whose older figure resembles the director, Holston notes that it faces the academy, not the outside world. This is our world, the director explains. Everything a boy needs is here.

Holston considers all he has seen, then asks if the Academy will accept his son. Yes, says the director, with the stipulation that he may take any disciplinary step necessary to make him fit in. Only then does it occur to Holston to ask how long his son will stay there.

Infinitely, says the director. Most parents prefer it that way. Holston nods. His son will arrive tomorrow.

On the way to his car, Holston passes the gatekeeper, and asks how he likes working for the academy. Stiffly, the gatekeeper explains that he doesn't work for the academy; he's a cadet, like the others. He was fifteen when he arrived. He'll soon be fifty-five.

The chauffeur opens the door for Holston and inquires if the boy will be starting school here. The answer is yes. The chauffeur hesitates. Roger is a high-spirited boy, he says. Holston interrupts sharply. "My son's a rotter. This is just the place for him." ■



Robert Morse

DWINDLING

(continued from page 75)

she had poured the pudding into a glorious crystal bowl. Momma let her carry the bowl all by herself to the refrigerator and put it inside to cool.

Then Daddy came home, and they ate the tapioca pudding all up, and Daddy said, oh, isn't she the prettiest little girl in the whole world and, oh, when God made her, He must have thrown the mold away ...

The image faded. She became aware that she was sitting in her car beside the road. She switched the ignition on and with a thrust at the gas pedal, she was on the road again, the road that stretched endlessly in either direction without pity and without mercy. But the right direction on it was not left or right. It was ...

Back.

Back to a time when she was young and loved and beautiful.

Oh, where were the roads to Then?

She drove. She drove for miles and miles, allowing instinct to take over. She felt as one with the salmon swimming upstream and the lemmings who drowned themselves. She skirted smartly around potholes and thumped, she thought, into the carcass of a dead dog. But she did not see anything. She was driving her way to a hill on a valley in a forest with a gulf ... a hill on a valley in a forest with a gulf ...

The chant became music, a symphony to her, as she drove toward the setting sun, blind to the neon signs that flared and faded away as they receded into the distance, blind to the billboards that advertised banks with catchy slogans and restaurants with odd names. She no longer feared that if she traveled far enough upon the road that she would come to the abrupt end of it and fall off the edge of the world. She knew that there would always be another shopping center and another subdivision rising like a Tinker Toy from the rutted, weed-infested land. And the houses would all look the same, and the people would all look the same.

She flashed by the entrance so quickly that she almost missed the name of the subdivision that gleamed in olde golde English lettering against the night that had come.

CAMBRIDGE FOREST the golden letters spelled.

She slammed on the brakes, her car skidding and jumping. Then she backed up and swept through the entrance to Cambridge Forest that was adorned with fonts of petunias and bowers of ivy. Leisurely, she began to cruise up one street and down another, finally certain that she would be home, be home soon enough. But it was dark now, and so each time she came to an intersection, she would stop the car and get out and read the street signs. Eventually, and without surprise, she came to Happy Valley.



She drove slowly, painstakingly, down Happy Valley and looked for the house where she belonged while the little song splashed through her head, buoyant and bubbling:

*I'm a hill on a valley in a forest with a gulf ...
I'm a hill on a valley in a forest with a gulf ...*

It was a game, it was only a game. She had only to find the right house with the right husband and the right son, and she would be home free.

CLICK!

Allee allee in free ... allee allee in freeeee ...

A chord from her childhood struck, and she smiled wistfully at the memory of it. *Hide and Go Seek, oh, Hide and Go Seek!* Oh, the late autumn evenings when the children would play *Hide and Go Seek* and run and hide from each other!

She remembered running as fast as she could through the chilled shadows and dropping down behind a bush or hurrying around the corner of a house while it counted to one hundred as fast as it could.

The children never noticed when the street lights came on and the darkness began. They did not notice when they began to shiver in their light sweaters against the cold. They would hold themselves still, stifling their laughter at the thought of being found.

Then the joyous child-call would come—*allee allee in free ... allee allee in freeeee ...*

And everything was safe again. It was safe to emerge from the shadows. It was safe to go home. It was safe to suck on hands suddenly stiff and chapped with cold. Momma would give her hot chocolate to drink from a beautifully iridescent white mug.

But it was different now.

It was not she who was playing *Hide and Go Seek*. It was her house that scuttled about in the shadows, it was her house that disguised itself with petunias and azaleas and dared her to find her way home again. She had only to find the right house and the game would be over. Once she had found her house, then she could shout *Allee allee in free!* And she would be herself again.

She examined each house as she passed, straining to see every detail, as if she were looking for a clue, a hint, to her vanished existence.

It was night. Street lights were on, and picture windows flickered into brilliance, turning the houses



into black silhouettes counterpointed by light from within. But even in the dim-lit night, she could see the familiar shapes of the ranch, the Spanish, and the contemporary, the contemporary, the Spanish, and the ranch. Here and there the draperies in some of the living rooms were open, and with a vast hunger she spied on children watching television or a woman saying something to a man while he read a newspaper. With tears in her eyes, she watched while a man parked his car in a driveway and his wife rushed out of the house and kissed him. They walked together into the house, their arms held tenderly about each other.

The door closed and she was alone.

She inched the car down the street, wondering which house was hers, the ranch, the Spanish, or the contemporary. She moved and stopped and hesitated and reached the end of Happy Valley. She turned her little car around and then inched down the street again. Inscrutable, anonymous, and repetitive, the houses clicked into focus and then faded away.

Oh God, but she was tired! Oh, dear God, but she wanted to stop driving and get out of the car!

But she drove and stopped and drove and hesitated and stopped again before a contemporary with clumps of azaleas against its foundation. The porch light was on. *It illuminated a young and dying magnolia tree upon a perfect lawn.*

She stared at the magnolia tree for a long, long time. Then she clicked off the car's ignition. She sat quietly and looked at the dying magnolia tree that shed its leaves before it knew the beauty of its blossoms.

The front door to the house opened, and a man looked out. He was of medium height and had brown hair. He walked out to the car and opened the door for her.

"You're late," he said. "The cleaning woman said she won't work for you again. You said that you'd be back by three."

"I'm sorry," she said, "but I had a terrible day. I was so lost, oh, so lost! I couldn't find my way home."

"Why didn't you call me?" he asked sensibly enough, reaching into the backseat for the limp bags of groceries. "I'd have given you directions for getting home."

"I couldn't remember the name of your com-

pany," she said. "I tried to call you, but I didn't know how."

Together they carried the bags up the front walk and into the house, dumping them upon the kitchen counters.

"And how's the Monster doing?" she asked brightly.

"Monster fell asleep hours ago," he said. "Call us when dinner is ready."

With that he went into the den to watch television.

She unearthed some lamb chops and lettuce and instant rice from a grocery bag and began to prepare dinner with a sense of delight. Moving briskly and with purpose, she turned the oven to BROIL and then set out the marvelously familiar dishes and flatware on the table.

Once the food for dinner was whisked onto the stove or into the oven and the salad had been made, she sorted the rest of the groceries into the cupboards and clicked the doors shut. She tucked the jar of soil acidifier for the magnolia tree between the washer and the dryer and then hid the little mechanical car she had bought for Scott behind the breadbox, deciding that she would surprise him with it after dinner. Then she opened the door to the refrigerator and tried to remember if she had carried the mint jelly all the way from New Jersey to Texas. Even as she searched for the jelly, she heard the sound of eager feet dancing their way to her.

"Mommy, mommy!", her child cried out. "Daddy and me were so worried about you! We thought you were lost and you'd never find your way home again!"

"What a silly dilly idea!" she scolded merrily, plucking the jar of mint jelly from the refrigerator. "You know that Mommy loves her own truly special baby and her own truly special Daddy and, no matter what, truly special me will always find her way home to the two of you!"

She smacked the refrigerator door shut and turned to give her child a smile of love and reassurance. Her smile wavered for a moment, somewhat like a candle flame about to go out, but then burned as brightly as before.

Even though

Even though

Even though the child who reached its arms out to her was not a little boy with true-blue eyes. The child was a little girl.

"Well, you can't get all the details right!" she screamed inside her brain, the words fading to a whimper.

"Did you have a nice day, Mommy?" the darling little girl asked.

"I had a fine day," she replied automatically, but then she remembered that now they lived down South. "I had a *real* fine day," she said. ■

A Thing About Machines

Copyright © 1960 by Rod Serling

by ROD SERLING

The original television script first aired on CBS-TV October 28, 1960

CAST

Bartlett FinchleyRichard Haydn
TV RepairmanBarney Phillips
EdithBarbara Stuart
InternJay Overholts
Girl on TVMargarita Cordova
PolicemanHenry Beckman
Telephone RepairmanLew Brown

ACT ONE

FADE ON:

1. STANDARD ROAD OPENING

With vehicle smashing into letters, propulsion into starry night then pan down to opening shot of play.

2. INTERIOR FINCHLEY HOUSE DAY LONG SHOT LOOKING FROM FRONT HALLWAY TOWARD LIVING ROOM

And a repairman who works behind a large console television set. Camera arcs back, shooting up the steps that lead to the second floor. Down them walks Bartlett Finchley, a tall, taciturn, grim-looking man in his late thirties or early forties. He's a bachelor with a keener than average mind and a tart tongue. His irascibility and general bad temper are so deeply rooted from habit that jaundice has become a part of his marrow. The camera follows him as he comes toward the living room and then stops. He stares across at the tv repairman. For just one fleeting moment we see fear cross his face and he starts almost as if he were about to beg a favor or seek a reassurance. Habit puts its foot down on this, however, and his face regains the look of icy hauteur.

3. MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT TV REPAIRMAN

Who looks up from his labors, lays aside a couple of tools, wipes his forehead with his sleeve.

REPAIRMAN

How are you today, Mr. Finchley?

4. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD FINCHLEY

Who takes a step into the room.

FINCHLEY

I'll answer that burning question after you tell me what's wrong with that electronic boo-boo, and also acquaint me with how much this current larceny is going to cost me.

The repairman rises, wipes his hands with a rag.

REPAIRMAN

Two hours' labor, broken set of tubes, new oscillator, new filter.

5. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

Whose face freezes. His lips are a thin, taut line.

FINCHLEY

How very technical and how very nice! And I presume I'm to be dunned once again for three times the worth of the bloody thing?

6. CLOSE SHOT REPAIRMAN

He studies Finchley and smiles gently.

REPAIRMAN

Last time I was here, Mr. Finchley, you'd kicked your foot through the screen. Remember?

7. TWO SHOT THE TWO MEN FINCHLEY

I have a vivid recollection. It was not working properly.

(he shrugs)

I tried to get it to do so in a normal fashion!

REPAIRMAN

By kicking your foot through the screen?

(he shakes his head)

Why didn't you just horsewhip it, Mr. Finchley? That'd show it who's boss!

8. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

He freezes and is obviously affected by what the repairman has said. He turns away abruptly.

FINCHLEY

What do you say we cease this small talk and get down to some serious larceny! You can read me off the damages ... Though I sometimes

wonder exactly what is the purpose of the Better Business Bureau when they allow you itinerant extortionists to come back week after week, move wires around, busily probe with ham-like hands, and accomplish nothing but the financial ruin of every customer on your route!

9. CLOSE SHOT REPAIRMAN

His smile fades and he takes a step across the room toward Finchley.

REPAIRMAN

We're not a gyp outfit, Mr. Finchley. We're legitimate repairmen. But I'll tell you something about yourself—

10. TWO SHOT

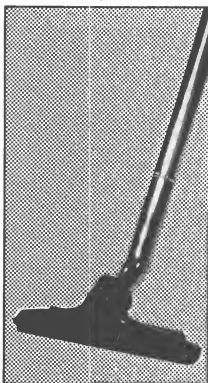
FINCHLEY

Spare me, please. I'm sure there must be some malnourished analyst with an aging mother to care for whom I can contact for that purpose—

REPAIRMAN

(very softly)

Why don't you hear me out, Mr. Finchley? That set doesn't work because obviously you got back there and yanked out wires, and Heaven knows what else! You had me over here last month to fix your portable radio—because you'd thrown it down the steps.





FINCHLEY
(icily)

It did not work properly.

REPAIRMAN

That's the point, Mr. Finchley. Why don't they work properly? Off hand I'd say it's because you don't treat them properly.

FINCHLEY

I assume there's no change for that analysis?

REPAIRMAN

(starting to collect tools)

What does go wrong with these things, Mr. Finchley? Have you any idea?

FINCHLEY

(with a short, frozen chortle)

Have I any idea? Now that's worth a scholarly ten lines in your Repairman's Journal! Blik the customer, but let him do the repairing!

REPAIRMAN

The reason I asked that is because whatever it is that really bothers you about that television set and the radio ... you're not telling me.

He waits for a moment.

11. MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT

FINCHLEY

As he turns away.

REPAIRMAN

Well?

FINCHLEY

Aside from being a rather incompetent clod, you're a most unresponsive man. I've explained to you already: The television set simply did not work properly. And that rinky-dink original Marconi operating under the guise of a legitimate radio—that gives me nothing but static.

12. DIFFERENT ANGLE TV REPAIRMAN

He finishes putting his tools in his bag, rises, flicks on the set, watches the picture come on, raises and lowers the volume and shuts it off. He throws a brief look at Finchley.

REPAIRMAN

You sure that was all that was wrong with them?

Finchley just makes a gesture of sloughing him off, turns his back to him. The repairman heaves a sigh and continues across the room.

13. MOVING SHOT REPAIRMAN

As he walks.

REPAIRMAN

I'll send you a bill, Mr. Finchley.

14. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

FINCHLEY

Of this I have no doubt.

15. FULL SHOT

FRONT HALLWAY

As repairman comes out, he puts his hand on the front doorknob, starts to open the door, then stops, turns.

16. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING OVER HIS SHOULDER TOWARD FINCHLEY

REPAIRMAN

Finchley—what is it with you and machines?

FINCHLEY

(rolling his eyes as if pressured by a total assault on his patience)
I will file that idiotic question in my memorabilia to be referred to at some future date when I write my memoirs. You will fill one entire chapter: "The Most Forgettable Person I Have Ever Met!"

17. CLOSE SHOT REPAIRMAN

As he shakes his head, half smiles and

walks out of the door. Camera pans over for a shot of Finchley who stands there motionlessly for a moment in a kind of stoic rage. Then suddenly his eyes go wide. His features twitch and suddenly it's as if someone uncovered his blanket of haughty preemptive mastery of all situations and left him frightened. He takes a hurried step to the door, swings it open, and shouts.

FINCHLEY

It just so happens, you boob ... it just so happens that every machine in my house is—

He stops abruptly, closes his eyes, then shakes his head as if cutting off any further possible admission of something. He closes the door and looks down at his hands which are shaking. He grabs them together, turns, and walks a little unsteadily into the living room.

18. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

As he suddenly looks up toward the mantelpiece. A clock has just started to chime.

19. CLOSE SHOT MANTEL CLOCK

As it chimes and continues to chime.

20. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

FINCHLEY

All right, that'll be about enough of that! Hear me?

21. DIFFERENT ANGLE

As Finchley, screaming, races toward the mantel.

FINCHLEY

(shouting)

I said that'll be just about enough of that!

22. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY AT MANTEL

As he grabs the clock in both hands, rips the plug out of the wall, slams the clock down on the floor.

23. INSERT CLOCK ON THE FLOOR

As Finchley stamps on it and for an incredible period of time the clock continues to chime until smashed into silence. Slow pan up for a shot of Finchley. He stands there out of breath, perspiring. We suddenly freeze frame on him and we hear Serling's voice.

SERLING'S VOICE

This is Mr. Bartlett Finchley, age thirty-eight, a practicing sophisticate who

A Thing About Machines

writes very special and very precious things for gourmet magazines and the like. He's a bachelor and a recluse with few friends—only devotees and adherents to the cause of tart sophistry. He has no interests—save whatever current annoyances he can put his mind to.

Whip pan over to television set where we see Serling on the screen.

SERLING

He has no purpose to his life—except the formulation of day-to-day opportunities to vent his wrath on mechanical contrivances of an age he abhors. In short, Mr. Bartlett Finchley is a malcontent, born either too late or too early in the century—and who in just a moment will enter a realm where muscles and the will to fight back are not limited to human beings.

(a pause)

Next stop for Mr. Bartlett Finchley—the Twilight Zone!

FADE TO BLACK:

OPENING BILLBOARD
FIRST COMMERCIAL

FADE ON:

24. INTERIOR LIVING ROOM FINCHLEY HOUSE DAY CLOSE SHOT ELECTRIC TYPEWRITER

Being expertly operated, a shorthand notebook alongside with a page flipped in the middle of the typing.

FINCHLEY'S VOICE
(over)

Miss Rogers?

Camera pulls back for a shot of Edith Rogers, an attractive thirty-year-old secretary, well groomed, very hep, and also very nice. She frowns a little at the sound of the voice that is somehow unpleasant and demanding.

25. FULL SHOT THE ROOM

As Finchley comes down the steps, enters the living room. He strides purposefully over to the page in the typewriter.

FINCHLEY

Is that all you've done?

EDITH

(meeting his stare and
in a similar tone)

That's all I've done. That's forty pages in three and a half hours. That's the best I can do, Mr. Finchley.

FINCHLEY

(wagging a finger at
the typewriter)

It's that ... idiotic gadget of yours.

Thomas Jefferson wrote out the Preamble to the Constitution with a feather quill and it took him half a day.

26. CLOSE SHOT EDITH

As she turns in her chair and looks directly up into Finchley's face.

EDITH

Why don't you hire Mr. Jefferson?

FINCHLEY

Did I ever tell you with what degree of distaste I view insubordination?

EDITH

Often and endlessly.
(she rises, reaches for her bag and starts to put things in it, straightens the papers on the desk)

I'll tell you what, Mr. Finchley. You get yourself another girl. Somebody with three arms and with roughly the same sensitivity as an alligator. Then you can work together till death do you part. As for me—I've had it!

She slams the bag shut by way of emphasis.

FINCHLEY

And you are going where?

EDITH

Where? I think I might take in Bermuda for a couple of weeks. Or Mexico City. Or maybe a quiet sanitarium on the banks of the Hudson.

27. TRACK SHOT WITH HER

As she walks across the room.

EDITH

(en route)

Any place where I can be away from the highly articulate, oh-so-sophisticated *bon vivant* of America's winners and diners—Mr. Bartlett Finchley.

(she whirls around at the door)
You've even got me talking like you! But I'll tell you what you won't get me to do! You won't turn me into a female Finchley with a pinched little scorn for a heart and a mean, petty, yellow-jaundiced view of everybody else in the world.

28. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

FINCHLEY

Miss Rogers ... please don't leave.

29. CLOSE SHOT EDITH

Reacting.

EDITH

I beg your pardon?

30. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

As he turns away embarrassed.

FINCHLEY

I do wish you'd ... you'd stay for a little bit.

(he sloughs off the typewriter
with a wave)

I don't mean for work. All that can wait. I was just thinking that ... well, we could have dinner or something, or perhaps a cocktail.

31. DIFFERENT ANGLE EDITH

I'm not very hungry and it's too early for cocktails.

(with a discerning, rather
intense look at him)

What's your trouble, Mr. Finchley?

32. TWO SHOT THE TWO OF THEM FINCHLEY

(with a ghostly and wan
attempt at his old manner)

You sound like a cave-dwelling orphan whose idea of a gigantic lark is a square dance at the local grange. I'm merely suggesting to you, Miss Rogers, that we observe the simple social amenities between an employer and secretary. I thought we'd go out ... take in a show or something.

EDITH

(with half a smile)

How very sweet, Mr. Finchley. Thank you, but no thank you. Tonight I'm taking a hog calling lesson. You know what a hog is, don't you, Mr. Finchley? He's a terribly bright fat head who writes for gourmet magazines and condescends to let a few other slobos exist in the world to take his rudeness and run back and forth at his beck and call! Good night, Mr. Finchley—

33. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

Now there is no subterfuge. He's desperately frightened and lonely.

FINCHLEY

Miss Rogers! Before you go ... before you go ...

(he makes a kind of half-hearted
gesture with his hands)

Have a cup of coffee or something.
(he turns away from her so
she won't see his face while
he says this)

I'd like very much ... I'd like very much not to be alone for a while.

34. CLOSE SHOT EDITH

Again she reacts.

35. DIFFERENT ANGLE THE ROOM

As she takes a step toward him.
EDITH

Are you ill?

He shakes his head.

EDITH
Bad news or something?
FINCHLEY

No.

EDITH
(after a pause)
What's your trouble?

FINCHLEY
(whirling around to her)
Does there have to be trouble
because I—

(he stops abruptly, heaves a
deep sigh, runs a hand over
his face, looks around and sort
of half falls into a chair)
I'm desperately tired. I haven't slept
for four nights and the very thought of
being alone now—

(he wets his lips)
Well, frankly, it's intolerable.
(he looks up at her)
Things have been happening, Miss
Rogers. Very odd things.

EDITH
Go on.

FINCHLEY
(points to tv set)
That ... that thing over there. It goes
on late at night and wakes me up.
Just goes on all by itself. And that
portable radio I kept in my bedroom.
It went on and off, too, just when I
was going to sleep.

(a pause and then very
confidentially)
There's a conspiracy in this house,
Miss Rogers.

(he sees her look and his voice
rises in rebuttal against it)

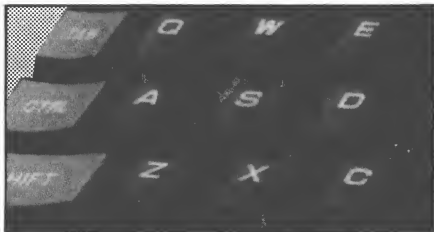
That's exactly what it is, a conspiracy.
The television set. The radio. Lights.
Electric clocks. That ... miserable car
I drive.

(he rises, his face white
and intense)

Last night I drove it into the driveway.
Just drove it into the driveway, mind
you. Very slowly. Very carefully.

(he takes a step toward her,
his fingers clenching and
unclenching at his side)

The wheel turned in my hand. Hear
me? The wheel turned in my hand.
The car deliberately hit the side of the
garage. Broke a headlight. That clock
up there on the mantelpiece.



36. CLOSE SHOT EDITH
As she looks.

37. INSERT MANTELPIECE
There is no clock there.

38. BACK TO SCENE
Edith turns to him questioning.
FINCHLEY
(a little lamely)
I ... I threw it away.
(a pause)
What I'm getting at, Miss Rogers, is
that for as long as I've lived ... I
have never been able to operate
machines.
He spits out the last word as if it were
some kind of epithet.

39. CLOSE SHOT EDITH
Staring at him. She is obviously con-
cerned for his sanity and in this brief,
passing moment feels a compassion for
him that she never knew possible.

EDITH
(very softly)
Mr. Finchley ... I think you ought to
see a doctor.

40. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY
His eyes go wide and in this moment he's
the Finchley of old. He shrieks.

FINCHLEY
A doctor? The universal panacea of
the dreamless twentieth-century idiot.
If you're depressed—see a doctor. If
you're happy—see a doctor. If the
mortgage is too high and the salary
too low—see a doctor. You, Miss
Rogers! You see a doctor!
(for a moment his voice is
plugged up by his own fury and
then screaming at her again)
I'm a logical, rational, intelligent man.
I know what I see. I know what I hear.
And for the past three months I've

been seeing and hearing a collection
of wheezy Frankensteins whose whole
purpose is to destroy me! Now what
do you think about that, Miss Rogers?

41. CLOSE SHOT EDITH
As she studies him for a moment.
EDITH
I think you're terribly ill. I think you
need medical attention.
(she shakes her head)
I think you've got a very bad case of
nerves from lack of sleep and I think
that way down deep you yourself real-
ize that these are nothing more than
delusions.

She turns as if to go.
FINCHLEY
Now where are you going?
She turns in the hallway entrance.

EDITH
You don't need company, Mr. Fin-
chley. You need analysis.
He goes over to her hurriedly and grabs
her arm.

FINCHLEY
You're no different than a cog-
wheeled, electrically generated metal
machine, yourself. You haven't an iota
of compassion or sympathy.

EDITH
(struggling to free her arm)
Mr. Finchley, please let me go!
FINCHLEY
(screaming at her again)
I'll let you go when I get good and
ready to let you go!

EDITH
(continuing to struggle)
Mr. Finchley ... let's not make an
ugly scene here! Now come on—let
me go—Mr. Finchley—
(then her voice frightened and
loud as she loses control)
Let go of me!

A Thing About Machines

42. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

As seen from over Edith's shoulder as with her free hand she slaps him stingingly across the face. He drops her arm abruptly and stares at her, then his face twists into a mask of impotent though burning fury. He speaks in a low voice.

FINCHLEY

Get out of here! And don't come back.

43. CLOSE SHOT EDITH

As she looks at him

EDITH

With distinct pleasure and manifest relief.

She whirls around, goes out into the hall. He stands there watching her. She opens the front door and is about to go out.

FINCHLEY

Remember, don't come back. I'll send you a check. I will not be intimidated by machines so it follows that no empty-headed little broad with a mechanical face can do anything to me either!

44. CLOSE SHOT EDITH

At the door.

EDITH

Mr. Finchley, in this conspiracy you're suffering ... this mortal combat between you and the appliances—I hope you get licked!

She goes out and slams the door behind her. Finchley goes to the door, leans against it, closes his eyes. He looks desperately tired, then all of a sudden he raises his head, suddenly and sharply. There is the distinct sound of the electric typewriter keys going. He listens for a horrified moment, then the sound stops. He slowly turns to face the living room and walks very slowly into the living room and toward the table with the typewriter on it.

45. TOP HAT SHOT OVER THE PAPER IN THE TYPEWRITER

Toward the approaching Finchley. He stops, hovering over it, and then yanks the paper out of the roller. The camera pans up until it's close on his face, hidden now by the paper. He slowly lets the paper fall from in front of his face, still staring down at it with his eyes.

46. DIFFERENT ANGLE THE FLOOR

As the paper slowly flutters down to land printed side up.

47. INSERT EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT

The line of type which reads, GET OUT OF HERE, FINCHLEY.

48. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

On his hands and knees suddenly scrambling for the paper, grabbing it, lumping it in his hands in front of his face.

FINCHLEY

Get out of here, Finchley? GET OUT OF HERE, FINCHLEY?

49. DIFFERENT ANGLE LOOKING UP AT FINCHLEY

As he rises, the typewriter in the foreground. He slams his hands down on the table near the typewriter.

FINCHLEY

Who are you to tell me to get out of here?

(then he stops abruptly, runs a hand over his perspiring face)
Why this is ... this is absurd. It's a typewriter. It's a machine. It's just a silly old machine.

50. DIFFERENT ANGLE OF HIM

As once again he stops stock-still as a voice comes from the television set.

VOICE FROM TV SET

Get out of here, Finchley.

51. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

As he whirls around to stare toward the tv set.

52. CLOSE SHOT TV SCREEN

It's blank.

53. ANGLE SHOT FINCHLEY

As he runs to the tv set and furiously turns it on. After a moment a picture comes on and very low sound. A girl singer singing something properly inane. Finchley stares at her for a long moment then turns and stares at the typewriter which we see over his shoulder. Then once again he closes his eyes and runs a hand over them. He seems to be breathing harder now. He leans against the wall for a moment then starts to walk out of the room. The girl singer on the tv set can be heard indistinctly underneath.

54. LONG SHOT FINCHLEY

As seen from the hall as he approaches. Just before reaching it, the television set goes silent and a girl's voice is heard.

GIRL'S VOICE

Why don't you leave, Finchley?
At this point Finchley is full face in camera. His eyes go wide. He whirls around.

55. FLASH INSERT TELEVISION SCREEN

The girl is just standing there silently smiling.

56. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

As his mouth forms an O as if trying to scream or remonstrate or do something.

57. CLOSE SHOT TELEVISION SCREEN

The girl is continuing to sing now just as before.

58. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN THE STEPS

As Finchley in a mad and furious run, heads up the steps away from his tormentors. He runs once again full into camera and we stay on him for a moment as he shouts.

FINCHLEY
(shouting)

All right! All right, you machines! You're not going to intimidate me! You hear me? You're not going to intimidate me! You ... you machines!

FADE TO BLACK:

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE ON:

59. INTERIOR FINCHLEY BEDROOM DAY (EARLY EVENING) FULL SHOT THE ROOM

Finchley in the foreground on the telephone. He's in a bathrobe and over his shoulder is, spread neatly on the bed, a whole change of clothes laid meticulously in order. Shirt, tie, trousers, et cetera. Finchley has obviously been on the phone for some time.

FINCHLEY
(on the phone)

Yes. Yes. Miss Moore, please. Agatha? Bartlett Finchley here. Yes, my dear, it has been a long time. Too long. Which, indeed, prompts this call. How about dinner this evening?

(a pause as his face falls)

I see. Well, of course, it is short notice, but ... yes ... yes, I see. Yes, I'll call you again, my dear.

He puts the phone down, stares at it for a moment, then suddenly getting a



thought, picks up the receiver and dials a number. After a pause--

FINCHLEY

Mrs. Donley, please. Pauline, is this you?

(then with kind of a sick smile and a bantering tone he's quite unused to)

And how's my favorite attractive young widow this evening?

(the smile fades)

Bartlett. Bartlett Finchley. I was wondering if--oh. I see. I see. Well, I'm delighted. I'm simply delighted. I'll send you a wedding gift. Of course. Good night.

He puts the receiver down, stares down at his hands, which clench it.

60. ANGLE SHOT

LOOKING UP AT HIM

From the phone cradle as his features contort. He suddenly picks up the phone and bodily yanks it out of the wall, fling-

ing it to the floor. He stands over it, his voice tremulous.

FINCHLEY

Telephones! Just like all the rest of them. Exactly like all the rest. A whole existence dedicated to embarrassing me or inconveniencing me or making my life miserable.

(he gives the phone a kick with his foot) Well, who needs you? Who needs any of you. Mr. Bartlett Finchley is going out this evening. He's going out to have a wonderful time with some good wine and who knows what attractive young lady I may meet during my meanderings. Who knows indeed?

He turns, walks into the bathroom.

61. INTERIOR BATHROOM

As he stands in front of the mirror for a moment and examines his face. He opens up the medicine cabinet and takes out an electric razor. Humming to himself, he plugs it in the electric socket

alongside the mirror, flicks a switch on the electric razor, puts it down for a moment while he applies powder to his face.

62. EXTREMELY TIGHT PROFILE SHOT FINCHLEY

Applying the powder as he suddenly stops, his eyes drawn down to the sink and to the electric razor which at this moment looks like some kind of reptilian beast staring up at him through a barbed and baleful opening in a grinning face.

63. DIFFERENT ANGLE FINCHLEY

As he picks up the electric razor, holding it at half an arm's length and studying it thoughtfully with just a hint of a rising tension. Very slowly he starts to take it to his face.

64. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT

Electric razor coming closer to Finchley's point of view.

65. FLASH SHOT FINCHLEY'S REFLECTION

In the mirror, as for just a brief, fleeting, nightmarish instant, the razor appears to jump out of his hand and attack his face. Finchley screams, flings it away and in the process stumbles backward against the bathroom door. We see his reflection, white faced, in the mirror. He slowly opens the door and stumbles into the bedroom. He stops in the center of the room and buries his face in his hands.

66. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT

His hands over his face as slowly the fingers part and once again he stares wild eyed out as a filtered voice like that of an operator is heard.

FILTERED VOICE #2

Finchley, get out of here.

67. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

His hands drop away and he stares down toward the phone. The receiver is off the cradle and lying on his side.

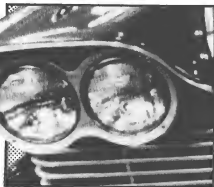
68. PAN SHOT OVER TO THE LOOSE ENDS OF THE WIRES

A few feet away.

69. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

As once again he shakes his head trying to deny what he's seeing and what he's hearing. He turns, walks over to the

A Thing About Machines



dresser mirror, lays the flats of his hands down on it, and leans against the dresser, his head down. Another sound suddenly injects itself into the silence and he lets out a muffled cry as he bolts upright, then realizes it's door chimes. He tightens his bathrobe strap and heads out of the room.

70. EXTERIOR FINCHLEY HOUSE DAY (EARLY EVENING) FULL SHOT THE FRONT PORCH AND FRONT DOOR

A policeman stands there and beyond him, clustered near the driveway, are a group of neighbors. They're standing in a semi-circle around Finchley's car which is half on the driveway, half hanging over the curb. Finchley opens the door and starts upon seeing the policeman.

POLICEMAN

That your car?

Finchley comes out onto the porch.

FINCHLEY

(nods)

That's mine.

(and then under his breath)

That dirty devil

POLICEMAN

She rolled down the driveway. Almost hit a kid on a bike. You ought to check your emergency brake, mister.

FINCHLEY

The emergency brake was on.

POLICEMAN

I'm afraid it wasn't. Or if it was—it's not working properly. Car rolled right down the driveway and into the street. You're lucky it didn't hit anyone.

71. TRACK SHOT FINCHLEY

As he walks past the policeman down the steps and over toward where the neighbors are standing. They make way for him with deference and a suggestion of apprehension. The man and his moods are well known to them.

72. DIFFERENT ANGLE FINCHLEY

Standing by car. He looks it up and down as if studying a foreign adversary.

FINCHLEY

(under his breath again)

You dirty devil

POLICEMAN

(comes up behind him)

You got the keys?

FINCHLEY

(instinctively reaches for a pocket then realizing he has his bathrobe on)

They're in the house.

POLICEMAN

All right, mister, you'd better pull her back into the garage. You better have those brakes checked first chance you get, understand?

(a pause, he looks toward

Finchley)

Understand, mister?

Finchley nods, turns, about to start back toward the house, then surveys his neighbors through slitted, suspicious eyes.

FINCHLEY

All right, dear friends . . . you may remain on my property for another three and a half minutes goggling at this amazing sight. I shall return with my automobile keys. And at that time I should like all of you to be off my property or else I shall solicit the aid of this underpaid gendarme to forcefully eject you.

(a pause as he eyes them

back and forth)

Idiot!

He whirls around on this line, heads back toward the house.

DISSOLVE TO:

73. INTERIOR FINCHLEY LIVING ROOM NIGHT

He lies fully clothed on the sofa smoking a cigarette and staring up toward the ceiling. There's the sound of footsteps from upstairs coming down. He looks toward the hallway. The telephone repairman with his service bag pauses.

TELEPHONE REPAIRMAN

She's operating all right now, Mr. Finchley

FINCHLEY

(acidly)

I'm deeply indebted. Convey my best to Alexander Graham Bell.

TELEPHONE REPAIRMAN

You tripped over the cord, is that what you said?

FINCHLEY

If that's what I said—that's precisely what happened.

TELEPHONE REPAIRMAN

Well, you're the boss, Mr. Finchley. But those wires sure look as though they'd been yanked out.

FINCHLEY

(deliberately forces his look down at his cigarette)

Do they indeed? Proving what a vast storehouse of knowledge you've yet to acquire. Good night!

The telephone repairman throws him a parting look and goes out the front door. Finchley rises from the couch. He stands there hesitantly for a moment, walks over to the television set, makes a motion as if to turn it on, then hurriedly withdraws his hand as if suddenly exposed to something hot. He looks aimlessly around the room, then walks over to a portable bar near the mantel, pours himself a stiff drink and downs it in a gulp. Then he looks almost challengingly over toward the television set.

74. INSERT TELEVISION SET

Silent and blank.

75. BACK TO SCENE

Finchley looks satisfied and pours himself another stiff drink which he downs in much the same manner as the first. He pours another and then another as the camera dollies in to him. It goes out of focus on his arm and mouth as they continue the motion of pour—drink, pour—drink. Camera pulls back and then back into focus. Finchley is lying on his sofa again, his coat off, his tie pulled down, his hair disheveled. An almost empty bottle is on the coffee table alongside. A glass over-turned alongside of it. Camera dollies in for a tight close shot of Finchley as his eyes flutter open. He wets his lips, puts a hand to an aching head, then with difficulty gets to a sitting position. At this moment he bolts upright as he hears the unmistakable sound of the clock chimes as before.

76. LONG ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN AT HIM AND THE ROOM

As he jumps to his feet, looks left and right, then runs over the mantel, scurrying along it with his fingers as if searching for the clock. The gongs persist and Finchley turns wild eyes to face the camera. At this moment joining the chimes is the sound of the electric typewriter pounding out a message all by itself.

**77. CLOSE SHOT
FINCHLEY**

As his head whips toward it.

**78. CLOSE SHOT
THE TYPEWRITER**

It's motionless but it's obviously typing and the paper is set in its carriage. Finchley takes a stumbling step over to the typewriter, rips the paper half out of the carriage and stares down at it.

79. INSERT THE PRINTING

GET OUT OF HERE, FINCHLEY. The paper is obliterated by Finchley's hand crumbling and tearing it up.

**80. DIFFERENT ANGLE
FINCHLEY**

As he whirls around to stare toward the television set.

**81. CLOSE SHOT
TELEVISION SET**

A series of voices developing into one in the blank expressionless voices of men and women who almost in chorus chant.

VOICES

(over and over again)

Get out of here, Finchley.

Get out of here, Finchley.

Get out of here, Finchley.

82. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

He lets out a gasping, agonizing sob and thrusts his knuckles into his mouth, then he stares wildly around the room, picks up a chair and in one illogical, unthinking moment flings it into the television set.

83. CLOSE SHOT THE SCREEN

Demolished by the chair. At this instant all sounds stop. The voices, the clock, the typewriter, and the only sound to be heard in the sudden silence is Finchley's heavy, sporadic breathing. He drags himself out of the room, shaking his head, opening and closing his eyes, rubbing his temples.

84. DIFFERENT ANGLE

As he reaches the front hall and at this moment the sounds start. The voices, the clock chimes, the typewriter and build to a tremendous crescendo.

85. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

He lets out a scream and starts up the steps.

**86. ANGLE SHOT
LOOKING UP THE STEPS**

At the top is the electric razor slithering down like some grotesque snake.

**87. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING
DOWN TOWARD FINCHLEY**

This time he cannot scream. He opens his mouth wide, turns, half trips down the two steps that he's ascended, grabs at the door, races out on the porch.

**88. EXTERIOR HOUSE AND
DRIVEWAY NIGHT
MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT
FINCHLEY**

As he slams the door shut and leans against it for a moment. He continues to hear all the sounds from outside the house.

89. TRACK SHOT WITH HIM

As he half runs, half stumbles to the driveway.

**90. ANGLE SHOT
OVER HIS SHOULDER**

Of the garage door with the light on over it. The door suddenly creaks open. From deep inside the darkness within can be seen the glint of two headlights. Suddenly they go on. There's the sound of an engine and the car starts to move out of the garage down the driveway toward the fear-stricken man who for a moment stands rooted in his tracks. He lets out another scream and runs down the driveway and into the night.

**91-95. DIFFERENT CLOSE
ANGLES FINCHLEY TILT**

As he runs down darkened streets.

**96-98. DIFFERENT ANGLES OF
TREETOPS OVERHEAD AND
THEN THE GROUND
UNDERNEATH**

**99-101. INTERSPERSE ANGLE
SHOTS OF HEADLIGHTS**

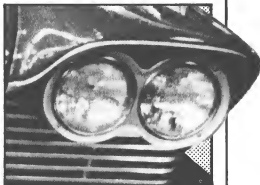
Rounding corners or coming down the street directly at him or playing on his face as he runs.

**102. SHOT
FINCHLEY**

As he races in a directionless, mad exodus away from a pursuer.

**103. TOP HAT SHOT
AS FINCHLEY RUNS
TOWARD CAMERA**

Stops, fills the screen with his face, then turns wildly to stare over his shoulder.



**104. LONG SHOT OVER HIS
SHOULDER**

Around the corner the car comes and once again bears down on him. He screams.

105. MOVING SHOT FINCHLEY

As he screams and races a few feet down the street, then up on the sidewalk.

**106. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING
DOWN ON CAR**

As it hurtles over the curb and races down the sidewalk after Finchley.

CUT TO:

**107. EXTERIOR FINCHLEY
STREET NIGHT**

We see Finchley, first a dark undefined mass in the distance. His figure takes on clarity as he runs toward the camera, turns, sees the lights of the car over his shoulder again as it continues to haunt him. He screams again, turns, stares toward his house, races on a diagonal across the street.

108. DIFFERENT ANGLE FINCHLEY

As he runs up the front yard, stumbles on the front step and clambers to his feet, still moving forward, bruised, disheveled, his breath in agonizing gusts. He gets to the front door, pulls on it. It's locked and unyielding. He pulls, then kicks and smashes at it with his fists, then stops for a moment, his head down, almost faint. He hears the noise of the car and immediately throws himself into the shadows, his back against the house as the lights of the car play on him briefly then pass. Camera moves in for an extremely tight close shot of Finchley as for the first time he feels a sense of relief and of escape. Once again he moves to the door, tries it again, then reaches into his pocket and pulls out a set of keys. He peers at them through the night gloom and finally picks out the right one. This

A Thing About Machines

he starts to insert in the door when suddenly there's the blaring, shrieking sound of a car horn, and as he turns around he's bathed in the light of the car headlights. He screams, drops the keys, runs off the porch and into the driveway.

109. REVERSE ANGLE OVER HIS SHOULDER LOOKING TOWARD END OF DRIVEWAY

As the car backs up and turns into the driveway.

110. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD FINCHLEY CAR'S POINT OF VIEW

As he races now aimlessly toward the garage. Its doors are open. Without thinking, he goes inside. The lights from the car play on him as the car now moves inexorably toward him.

111. CLOSER ANGLE FINCHLEY

As he races this way and that way, upsetting paint buckets, ladders, tools, as they cascade around him. He's like a small animal in a trap and always the lights of the car come closer and closer.

112. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD CAR

As the car moves in on him.

113. CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY

As now he stops, his arms outstretched, his back against the far wall of the garage as the car now moves in for the kill, its engine a shrieking crescendo of sound, the lights a white hot glare illuminating him. Finchley's scream joins the roar of the engine as we

CUT ABRUPTLY TO:

114. EXTERIOR DRIVEWAY DAY CLOSE SHOT FINCHLEY'S HAND

Pull back for a group shot of a couple of policemen, a white-coated intern, and beyond them the neighbors who stand around staring at the body of Finchley lying in the driveway in front of the closed doors of the garage.

POLICEMAN

Heart attack, doctor, that what you think?

INTERN

(looks up from examination)

That's what it appears.

POLICEMAN

Neighbors said they heard him shouting about something during the night. Sounded scared. What do you suppose scared him?

INTERN

(rises, closes his bag)

Whatever it was, it's a little item that

he's taken with him. Was he out here?

POLICEMAN

Inside the garage in front of his car, just slumped against the far wall, eyes wide open.

(then looking down at the body)

And looking just like that. As if he'd seen a ghost.

(a pause)

Or as if that ghost were chasing him!

115. DIFFERENT ANGLE THE GROUP

With the closed garage door in evidence behind them.

POLICEMAN

He may have been drunk and thought the car was heading down on him.

INTERN

(softly)

Maybe. It could just be!

The camera starts a slow pan up the closed garage doors to the window where inside we can see the car sitting there motionlessly and impassively.

SERLING'S VOICE

Yes, it could just be. It could just be that Mr. Bartlett Finchley succumbed from a heart attack and a set of delusions. It could just be that he was tormented by an imagination as sharp as his wit and as pointed as his dislikes. But as perceived by those attending ... this is one explanation that has left the premises with the deceased.

Look for it tied under M for Machines ... in the Twilight Zone.

FADE TO BLACK:

THE END



FADE TO BLACK

(continued from page 31)

nothing on, from three to five in the morning. Sometimes I come out; sometimes I stay and wait."

"What's it like?"

"It's grey. I suppose it resembles purgatory. It's endless, soundless waiting, while no time at all passes. There's no firm ground. It's floating without feeling. But when the shows begin again, it's as though no interval has existed. The sign-on is one of my favorites. All those beautiful places and ... oh, the music. The anthem is so wonderful. There are no people in that one, so I stand off to the side, just out of the frame. I sit in the audience on Carson. Ever seen me? I thought not. I go by too quickly."

"What to say? 'Why tell me? Why me?'"

"I needed someone to know. Imagine what it's like to do this and not have anyone to tell. My children would have me committed. I'd show them, but their minds would refuse to see, like yours has been trying to do. I may need your help. I went to other stations before I came to you. You were the only one to care about an ugly old man like me. You were the only one with a heart."

"But I don't know what I could do to help."

"I don't either," he interrupted. "But even someone like me who lives so rarely in the real world may find the need of help."

His voice dropped, softened, and when he spoke the air hissed through his words. "My children don't know where I am. They put me in a home. A nice, clean, sanitary place where busy-body nurses keep track of everything you do. They won't even leave you in the bathroom to do your business in private. Always checking on the results, reducing you to infancy. The indignity is abhorrent. I escaped them, and I came here. My checks go to the post office. They could have found me if they tried, but I knew they wouldn't."

"You're tired," I said, my throat thick with tears. "I should go now. Let me help you to bed."

I lifted him out of the chair and guided him to the studio bed. He allowed me to take off his shoes and cover him, but when I tried to turn off the tv, he roused himself and said, "No, leave it on. I like the light on. I don't like the darkness."

As I let myself out I heard the harsh, whispery sound of his snores. Lord, what had I gotten myself into?

I didn't watch tv on my days off. If he was crazy, then so was I, and it scared me that my association with him could make me doubt my own sanity. What I'd seen was totally impossible. It had been late; I'd been tired. It was dark in his apartment and his voice had mesmerized me. I'd realized what it was about his voice that had bothered me: it had no accents, no inflections, no variations in tone. Somehow he'd hypnotized me

and made me share his fantasy, made me imagine it with him.

Though I denied Alistair's delusion, unconsciously I searched for him while I was at work. When I caught myself looking for him, I scolded myself. He didn't appear; I'd known he wouldn't. It was a mental aberration.

Still, Alistair became very important to me. I worried about his health, his isolation, and took food and extra blankets to his room. When he was there, we'd chat. He never again mentioned his belief that he could enter his tv. We avoided the subject, like lovers avoid an argument they can't resolve, hoping it will go away. When he wasn't there, I'd let myself in (his door had no lock; nothing worth stealing, he told me) and leave what I'd brought. The tv was always on. Three times I reached to shut it off, and each time I refrained. I couldn't bring myself to meddle with what wasn't mine.

A Friday night in Master Control. The doorbell rang. I knew it was Alistair, and I knew it was bad.

I took his hat as I led him in and helped him to a chair. He was grey on the edges and incredibly weak. It took minutes before he could lift his head to speak. I wondered at the strength of purpose that had gotten him this far; it was surely part of the will that had bent my mind to his and made me see through his eyes.

He'd been crying, and as he tried to speak more tears welled up and spilled down the face of this aged mannequin.

"It's broken," he croaked. "It happened when I was in there. It was like the universe turned upside down. Like a nuclear blast, I suppose. I only got out in time." He paused, his frail shoulders shaking, his palsied hands groping for mine. I held them until he calmed.

Our truce of silence was broken. "Tell me," I soothed.

"You've got to fix it. I'm dying. I have to get back in. I don't want to die out here. Please, you've got to fix it."

"The tv?"

"Of course the tv!" He was uncharacteristically brusque with me. "There were flames ... sparks on the outside, I guess. Inside there were flames and earthquakes. Don't lie to yourself now. I need your help. I told you I would. Can't you drop your ridiculous prejudices long enough to help me? Please," he begged, and his anger changed to tears, "I can't stay out here. If I'm to die, let me do it my own way. Maybe I won't need to die in there at all."

"Alistair, please. You don't go into the tv. You just think you do. Let me call an ambulance. You need to go to the hospital."

"Never," he shuddered. "Tubes and smells and medicines. Andrea, look at me. Don't back out on me now. You know the truth, stop denying it.



Help me, please."

His protestations terrified me.

"Okay. All right. I will. Stop this now. Please, don't do this. You have to be calm. I'll help you. I swear I will. Relax now ... relax."

"It broke before," he said as he quieted. "It took an entire week to have it fixed. Cost a whole check. The man said the picture tube was going, but he fixed some other things to keep it alive."

Alive? It was more than a machine to him. "We must have ten tvs here. Won't one of them do? We'll take one over tonight. I'll give you mine."

"You won't understand. I already tried. Don't you think I tried? I rented a set. It won't work on any other set. It's that picture tube. Make it work long enough for me to get back."

"I don't know if I can."

"But you'll try." It was a statement.

"I'll try."

Half an hour later we were in his room. I'd supported him as best I could while lugging the tool kit, letting it thump off my leg. My repair experience was limited, but I knew enough in theory. I found some burned out tubes and replaced them, checked wires and re-soldered some connections. The repairman was right. The picture tube was so old it was wearing out. There was nothing left to do but try to find the little bit of life left. Once Alistair saw that his adventures were imaginary, I'd rush him to the hospital and we'd keep him with us. I worked through the night, and by morning I'd

done everything I could do.

We stood together in front of the screen in the ghostly light of dawn. He leaned on my shoulder. "This might not work," I cautioned.

He smiled, a half-smile. "I know," he whispered. "I only need a few minutes. And thank you."

Weak with fear, I realized he had no phone. What would it do to him if the set didn't work? Where was the nearest pay phone? "Okay. Ready?"

"Yes. The names of my children are on the table. Tell them what you have to. Tell them that you knew me. And you keep the set. Keep it always, like you'd keep the urn that holds the ashes of a loved one." I shuddered at this grotesque remark. Was it wrong of me, perhaps fatally, to encourage his delusion? "Do it for me. As long as you have the set, maybe I'll be alive inside. We don't know, do we?"

"No, we don't." Sad and confused, I hugged him, this poor, desperate little man who'd made me a part of his death. He patted my back, aware of the pain he was causing me. And then I turned on the set.

Nothing happened. Nothing at all. A moan escaped him, and I reached out in time to catch him when he fell. His pulse was thready and weak. "An ambulance, Alistair. I'll go call."

"No, no ambulance. It's no use."

"Wait ... wait, I didn't ..." My mistake galled me. How could I ... "Alistair," I pleaded, "hang on. It's not plugged in. The set's not plugged in." Though I whispered, my voice sounded like a scream inside my head.

Leaving him propped against the chair, I scrambled behind the set and plugged it in. For a moment nothing happened. And then, it hummed. The audio came up slowly. There was no picture, and then it lightened, didn't it? Yes, there. The sides were growing lighter, and slowly, so slowly, the picture pulled itself out to the edges of the screen. The music threaded out. It was the sign-on.

"Look, Alistair, look. It's your favorite." I helped him to a sitting position.

His face lit up with the screen. "Closer," he gasped. "Get me closer." I half dragged, half carried him to the screen. "You'll have to put me through," he whispered.

"Oh, Alistair, I can't." I'd begun to cry. He'd die here, and there was nothing I could do to stop it.

"Yes, you can. Lift me. Carry me through. It'll take me if I'm far enough through."

The charade was complete. What was wrong with a delusion if he died happy? For a moment we both touched the cool screen, then he began to dissolve. In my arms he grew mist-like, and then my arms went numb, vaporized before my eyes. Fear scrambled up my spine as we were sucked through a tunnel, gliding forward as if on the Peo-

FADE TO BLACK



ple Mover at a Disney World ride. And we were there. Both of us, standing on a cliff in the Grand Canyon. As we approached Alistair's substance returned, but before his body slid from my arms I noted that his weight had not. He'd been light as tissue. Now he stood beside me.

With absolute certainty, I knew that here I could fly. As in childhood dreams, I could outstretch my limbs and soar, buoyed by the sheer intensity of my desire. Ecstasy washed over me, the pure happiness known only by the nonconscious mind at that brief moment of awakening. At the same time the music, oh, the music eddied around me in near visible waves. It permeated all and I was lost in the glorious complexity of being the music myself. If I opened my mouth, the music would emanate from me, flow forth to merge with the sky, the red earth, the rocky cliffs. I was all that I could sense, and more.

"Go back." Alistair gazed at me lovingly, the glassiness gone from his eyes. I looked into the depths of an ageless soul, a man of no real infirmities. The blue was sharp and piercing. "Go while you can."

"No," I cried. "I don't want to. Let me stay with you. Let me stay for a while." If this was madness, I'd choose to be mad.

"You can't." His words rushed past me, heard in the heart, not the ears. "You must go. Look."

I looked at the tunnel. It extended back through time to a tiny square, to his room, dark and lonely, bathed in an inhuman, lifeless glow. The armchair wavered, shrank, grew back. The picture tube was dying.

"Go back now," he said as images swirled around us. "Quickly." But when I turned to him we stood on my own Maine coastline facing an ocean more brilliant than the eye could perceive, rising, a living wall of water; it crashed and rumbled in the air. I could breathe water, could swim to Atlantis and live with mermen and maids.

"Please," he begged, taking my hand, using this other to wipe the traces of spray from my face. "You don't need this yet." His voice held the conviction of the young, the accent a Scot's brogue, deep and gentle. "You have things to do, to live. When you're ready, maybe you'll find your way back to me."

One last look, one last breath, and I moved backward a step. He smiled so gently as I pulled my hand from his, that in my state of heightened sensitivity my heart nearly stopped. The scene I was leaving sucked at me, trying to pull me back into the vortex. If his sheer force of will hadn't driven me away, would I have stayed? Yes, no doubt. He had sent me out and I had obeyed.

I inched back as the wind rushed by me, using every ounce of strength to work my way back through the tunnel, and I watched Alistair. He drew

himself up to his full five-three and waved to me from the shore of a Hawaiian beach. Nausea swept through my body; effluvia threatened to pour from my nose and mouth. With one painful, aching thrust I wrenched away, arms and legs folding around me like a collapsing card table. My heart pounded a staccato beat; my ears throbbed. I fell, sitting crab-like on the floor, and stared as the picture faded slowly ... so slowly to black. The screen sucked in on itself to a tiny pinpoint of light, and then the light was gone. He was gone. I cried, sobbing to relieve the pressure of the balloon inside my head; I wept for the friend I'd lost. And I cried for myself because I'd seen something I'd never stop longing for. Real life paled, and I understood, as I never had before, his compulsion.

At work they told me I looked awful. I'd acquired a greyish pallor, a flat, alien look of illness, and they insisted I see a doctor and take a few days off. A doctor wasn't necessary, but I rested and after a few days my color improved. I regained my edges, my dimensionality, and was relieved to lose that blank, waxy quality I'd noticed first in him.

I wrote to his children to tell them he'd disappeared. They never showed up to claim his worthless belongings, but they called the police. An officer visited me, asked a few questions, and did nothing. If murder crossed their minds, they dismissed it. There was no body and no possible motive. The case was dropped. Apparently, his children accepted the callous declaration of death by misadventure.

I rescued his tv and took it to my apartment. It'll never work again, but I'll keep it always.

Call me a tv addict. I migrated south to a job as a director. My first assignment was to make a new sign-on and sign-off, so I made four of each, seasonal, with the most beautiful, fetching scenes I could create. Someday I'll do the kinds of shows that Alistair would like. I keep our secret; it's not the kind of thing you tell people about.

Folks wonder why it is that I have three tv sets. One is Alistair's, of course, and one is the twenty-five inch set that I like to watch. I had it tuned to Carson a few nights ago, and the guest was some obnoxious little man who drums for a living. The cameras cut away to the band and there he was ... my Alistair, sitting in the back, tootling away on a clarinet. I stared, amazed that the camera stayed on him, and he winked at me. Directly at me. I laughed, winked back, and raised my beer in a toast to my friend Alistair ... Alistair with his purple star-shaped scar, his ill-fitting, odd-looking tuxedo ... the only, the truly, ultimate tv star.

Oh, yes, my third set? I bought it at an auction. It's just like his ... same rnae, same model, with only one difference ... mine works. ■

The legendary Kafkaesque series returns — on tape.

Without a doubt, *The Prisoner*—a late-1960s British television series starring Patrick McGoohan—was one of the finest shows ever developed for tv. The series made its American network debut in 1968 as a summer replacement, and its unique combination of high-tech science fiction, fantasy, and spy thriller elements was surprisingly popular. Since then, it has played now and again on network and PBS stations to an audience that seems to take it more and more seriously with each viewing.

Recently, MPI Home Video released the seventeen original *Prisoner* episodes on video cassettes. Now old fans and newcomers can see this limited series in its entirety and replay each episode as often as they like. This is important because unlike most made-for-tv fare, *The Prisoner* is well worth studying.

When the show first appeared in the U.S., American viewers already knew Patrick McGoohan from his work in *Secret Agent*. Produced during the heyday of the original James Bond thrillers, *Secret Agent* was a series about a spy named Drake who, unlike 007, lost as often as he won and seemed continually disenchanted with his job. The series had some of the familiar British spy humor, but where the Bond films were light and fantastic, *Secret Agent* was dark and brooding. Even the show's theme song, performed by Johnny Rivers, was downbeat. "They've given you a number," Rivers sang, "and taken away your name."

The Prisoner series plays out the implications of that line from the *Secret Agent* theme. In the opening segment of each episode, McGoohan—who remains nameless throughout but who may very well be secret agent Drake—resigns from his sensitive government position without explanation. Almost immediately, he is drugged, kidnapped, and taken to The Village, a kind of high-tech Victorian seaside resort that serves as an open-air prison for people who know too much to remain free. In The Village, life is regulated, individuality is suppressed, and no one can tell the prisoners from the guards. All Villagers have numbers instead of names. The Village is run by No. 2—obviously a tenuous position, because each episode features a new



Patrick McGoohan

actor in the role. McGoohan's character is told that he is No. 6, and his response, "I am not a number, I am a free man," is greeted with horrifying laughter.

No. 6's captors want to know why he resigned, and he refuses to tell them. He has no idea who No. 1 might be or who runs The Village—the Good Guys or the Bad Guys. In fact, it seems likely that No. 6 has been imprisoned by his own people. Each episode, then, pits No. 6 against a new No. 2, who tries to break him, force him to explain why he resigned, and make him conform to Village life while McGoohan tries to maintain his individuality and escape.

The scripts are ingenious and often extremely complicated. In one episode, "Schizoid Man," No. 6 is drugged and, through stimulus-response training and brain-washing, taught to be someone else. When he awakens, he is told that he is No. 12, a Village agent, and that his job is to help break No. 6 by impersonating him, by stealing his identity. He is then confronted by a look-alike who claims to be the real No. 6, and McGoohan's character is forced into the position of trying to break himself. In "Living in Harmony" the Village authorities again use hallucinogens to make No. 6 believe he is living in the Old West, that he is an ex-lawman who, with no explanation, has resigned his job as sheriff. The idea, of course, is to disorient the Prisoner by confusing his notions of fact and fantasy, and the episode itself is a wonderful transformation of a spy

thriller into a Western, complete with dance hall girls, gunfighters, and the judge (actually No. 2) who runs the town, a Western version of The Village called Harmony.

If the series owes much to Ian Fleming, it owes more to the works of Franz Kafka. Like Joseph K of Kafka's novel *The Trial* and like K of *The Castle* (both characters are as nameless as No. 6), the Prisoner searches for the source of an anonymous authority that is everywhere and nowhere. But unlike Kafka's characters who are defeated before they begin, No. 6 is never beaten, though he is never truly victorious.

In the amazing final episode, written and directed by McGoohan, No. 6 survives the ultimate test—a traumatic confrontation with his own past—and goes on a surreal journey through the secret labyrinths of The Village and his own mind. Finally, he is offered a choice: freedom or the position of No. 2. He rejects both, destroys The Village, and escapes to London where, unfortunately, life is not very different from the world he just left. In the end, the series suggests that, like Kafka's characters, No. 6 is as much a prisoner of his own self as he is of the powers that be.

The Prisoner is very much a product of the 1960s, but it bears up well in the '80s. Almost twenty years ago, this series set a standard for what quality television could be. Since then, the anonymous authorities who control tv's Village have come up with little or nothing to match its power and intelligence. ■

PALADIN

(continued from page 50)

The years, all the days and hours, exist. As solid and as real as mountains and oceans and men and women and the baobab tree. Look, he said, at the lines in my face and deny that time is real. Consider these dead weeds that were once alive and try to believe it's all just vapor or the mutual agreement of Popes and Caesars and young men like you.

"The lost hour must never come, Billy, for in that hour it all ends. The light, the wind, the stars, this magnificent open place we call the universe. It all ends, and in its place—waiting, always waiting—is eternal darkness. No new beginnings, no world without end, just the infinite emptiness."

And he opened his hand, which had been lying in his lap, and there, in his palm, rested the watch, making no sound at all, and stopped dead at eleven o'clock. "Should it strike twelve, Billy, eternal night falls; from which there is no recall."

There he sat, this very old man, just a perfectly normal old man. The most recent in the endless chain of keepers of the lost hour, descended in possession from Caesar and Pope Gregory XIII, down through the centuries of men and women who had served as caretakers of the excellent time-piece. And now he was dying, and now he wanted to cling to life as every man and woman clings to life no matter how awful or painful or empty, even if it is for one more hour. The suicide, falling from the bridge, at the final instant, tries to fly, tries to climb back up the sky. This weary old man, who only wanted to stay one brief hour more with Minna. Who was afraid that his love would cost the universe.

He looked at Billy, and he extended his hand with the watch waiting for its next paladin. So softly Billy could barely hear him, knowing that he was denying himself what he most wanted at this last place in his life, he whispered, "If I die without passing it on ... it will begin to tick."

"Not me," Billy said. "Why did you pick me? I'm no one special. I'm not someone like you. I run an all-night service mart. There's nothing special about me the way there is about you! I'm not Ronald Colman! I don't want to be responsible, I've never been responsible!"

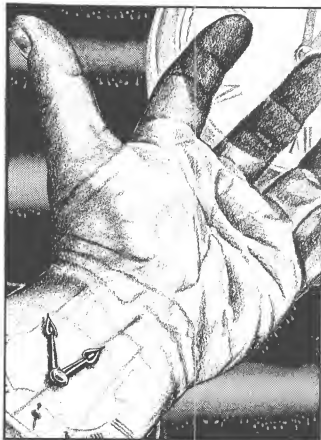
Gaspar smiled gently. "You've been responsible for me."

Billy's rage vanished. He looked wounded.

"Look at us, Billy. Look at what color you are; and look at what color I am. You took me in as a friend. I think of you as worthy, Billy. Worthy."

They remained there that way, in silence, as the wind rose. And finally, in a timeless time, Billy nodded.

Then the young man said, "You won't be losing Minna, Dad. Now you'll go to the place where she's been waiting for you, just as she was when you first met her. There's a place where we find every-



thing we've ever lost through the years."

"That's good, Billy, that you tell me that. I'd like to believe it, too. But I'm a pragmatist. I believe what exists ... like rain and Minna's grave and the hours that pass that we can't see, but they are. I'm afraid, Billy. I'm afraid this will be the last time I can speak to her. So I ask a favor. As payment for my life spent protecting the watch.

"I ask for one minute of the hour, Billy. One minute to call her back, so we can stand face-to-face and I can touch her and say goodbye. You'll be the new protector of this watch, Billy, so I ask you please, just let me steal one minute."

Billy smiled and nodded. "We can spare the time."

Gaspar reached out with his free hand and took Billy's. It was an affectionate touch. "That was the last test, young fella. Oh, you know I've been testing you, don't you? This important item couldn't go to just anyone. And you passed the test, my friend, my last friend. When I said I could bring her back from where she's gone, here in this place we've both come to so often to talk to someone lost to us, I knew you would understand that anyone could be brought back in that stolen minute. And you let me take it instead of using it for yourself.

"I'm content, Billy. Minna and I don't need that minute. But if you're to carry on for me, I think you do need it. So I give you a going-away present ..."

And he started the watch, whose ticking was as loud and as clear as a baby's first sound; and the sweep-second hand began to move away from eleven o'clock.

Then the wind rose, and the sky seemed to cloud over, and it grew colder, with a remarkable silver-blue mist that rolled across the cemetery; and though he did not see it emerge from that grave at a distance far to the right, Billy Kinetta saw a shape move toward him. A soldier in the uniform of a day past, and his rank was Lance Corporal. He came toward Billy Kinetta, and Billy went to meet him as Gaspar watched.

They stood together and Billy spoke to him. And the man whose name Billy had never known when he was alive, answered. And then he faded, as the seconds ticked away. Faded, and faded, and was gone. And the silver-blue mist rolled through them, and past them, and was gone; and the soldier was gone.

Billy stood alone.

When he turned back to look across the grounds to his friend, he saw that Gaspar had fallen from the shooting-stick. He lay on the ground. Billy rushed to him, and fell to his knees and lifted him onto his lap. Gaspar was still.

"Oh, god, Dad, you should have heard what he said. Oh, geez, he let me go. He let me go so I didn't even have to say I was sorry. He told me he didn't even *see* me in that foxhole. He never knew he'd saved my life. I said thank you and he said no, thank *you*, that he hadn't died for nothing. Oh, please, Dad, please don't be dead yet. I want to tell you ..."

And the old man, the very old man, opened his eyes.

"May I remember you to my old girl, Billy?" And his eyes closed and his caretakership was at an end, as his hand opened and the most excellent timepiece, now stopped again, at one minute past eleven, floated from his palm and waited till Billy Kinetta extended his hand, and then it floated down and lay there silently. Safe. Protected:

There in the place where all lost things returned, the young man sat on the cold ground, rocking the body of his friend. And he was in no hurry to leave. There was time. ■

The Author gratefully acknowledges the importance of a discussion with Ms. Ellie Grossman in the creation of this work of fiction.



CALL OF CTHULHU

The Original
HORROR
Roleplaying
Game



CALL OF CTHULHU is based on the 1920s horror-fantasy writings of H. P. Lovecraft, and is available by permission of Arkham House. Ask for it at your favorite hobby or game store, or order it by mail directly from Chaosium Inc. for \$20.00 plus \$2.00 for postage and handling.

Chaosium Inc. PO Box 6302-TZ
Albany CA 94706-0302



Lots of Loveable People in Less Than Loveable Flicks

I have to admit that this column has shown a consistently hostile attitude toward the "movers and shakers" of the filmic community, the "suits," the bankers of the movie biz.

How many times I pictured them—unfairly and grotesquely, to be sure (it must be my cartoonist's eye)—scheming coldly for profit, ignoring all the finer things, brutally manipulating sensitive artists and doing cruel, insensitive things to those artists' productions? How many times have I mocked them harshly for these practices and beat them over their collective heads with clubs as cleverly wrought and prettily jewelled as I could manage to construct for the purpose?

Times past counting, I fear. Enough times, perhaps, so that it might be hinted that I have been almost as unkind in my way as they have been in theirs. It could even be whispered, very quietly of course, that clever readers found it possible to detect something like joy in my mood when I made so bold as to nip at the heels of producers and even bounce an occasional pebble off the backs of their pointy heads; it might even be said that those same readers could detect little fiendish cackles popping from me as I did these things.

Well (here imagine a deep, mature sigh), perhaps the time has come for me to allow as how, now and then, there may be something to be said in sympathy for those grasping, greedy money-grubbing producers I have mocked so persistently; that they may occasionally deserve a little pity from this column, even a little understanding shake of the head.

I have, at various points during these last few weeks, had occasion to feel genuinely sorry for them; to even think of them as poor bastards. True, it was nothing noble which led them to their plight. They did not take their risks from any high motivations; all they wanted was to make another buck no matter how—but, GOD, IMAGINE POURING ALL THOSE DOLLARS INTO A PROJECT, MILLIONS AND MILLIONS OF 'EM, AND GETTING N*O*T*H*I*N*G!!!

And it's not as if they didn't calculate; it's not as if they didn't analyze with painful care a previous money-making movie and then try to do another one just like it only—

know—different; it wasn't like their hearts weren't in the wrong place, but to do all that, and to hire all those expensive genius types to help them do it, and then to come up with a dud like D.A.R.Y.L.—well, it just makes you wonder.

D.A.R.Y.L. is yet another cyborg, only he is (unlike the same sort of device pictured in "The Terminator") cute. He appears to be an attractive human male child who might have been designed by Norman Rockwell for the express purpose of posing for a series of that artist's *Saturday Evening Post* covers. He is more than cute, actually; he is loveable, so loveable that everybody in the movie, with the sole exception of an Evil General, adores him and wishes him well and wants him to play on their Little League team or adopt him legally.

Unfortunately, for cute, little D.A.R.Y.L., the Evil General is in charge of all the helicopters and police cars and war rooms so essential to our oppressive civilization that the loveable cyborg must resort to desperate means in order to survive. Of course, he does resort to them (too bad for you if you happened to be driving your brand new Toyota on the highway as D.A.R.Y.L. happened by on his escape route, buddy), and of course, he does survive, but not before we cry a little because this is

a very sentimental picture. And because it WANTS us to cry a little, it kills off kindly old men and makes mothers sad, and after it does stuff like that, it cuts to bright light so our eyes will water just in case we haven't got around to sniveling on our own.

Among other dopey things, D.A.R.Y.L. contains a central technical howler in that the Evil General has the little bastard under this thumb all along, if only he or the scriptwriters knew it, since most of D.A.R.Y.L.'s mind is in a mainframe computer, which the Evil General has access to and could unplug at any time. But do you think those expensive sons of bitches, the poor producers, laid out millions to hire spotted that? Think again, sweetheart.

And if you really want to feel sorry for a gang of producers, consider the poor bastards (two unfortunate gentlemen named Golan and Globus, ladies and gentlemen) who hired Tobe Hooper to direct *Lifeforce*. I've been boosting Hooper ever since *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, in spite of naught but diddly poo from him since. After seeing *Lifeforce*, however, I retire from that quarter. I give up.

This movie is a dog, a dud, a dreary, stupid botch, and all I could think of while watching the ghastly thing stagger from one inept attempt



Lifeless dustbags in *Lifeforce*.

at getting the audience's attention to another way: Jesus H. Chr-st—think of the MONEY!!! Think of the bill on this entirely unconvincing special-effects puppet they're trying to convince me is alive! Think how costly it must have been just to do the make-up on these pointlessly milling zombies, none of whom can be properly seen thanks to atrocious lighting! What do you suppose this dismal actor is being paid to actually star—God save the mark!—in this idiotic movie, and why won't somebody help him read his lines? Gah! Yech!

The film concerns a perfectly promising situation: a group of scientists exploring Haley's comet comes across an enormous, incredibly ancient spaceship in its tail and discovers therein a vast number of sinister cadavers, most of them batlike. The scientists are unfortunate enough to inadvertently resurrect and become hopelessly entangled with a few survivors in the ship's crew who turn out to be the dreadful historical source of humanity's many vampire superstitions.

Unfortunately, a promising situation deteriorates rapidly. Deteriorates... deteriorates...

Another veteran director of horror movies, George Romero, has come up with the third of what has developed into an—*Of the Dead* series; this one being *Day Of The Dead*. We see now that things have gotten even worse. A plague of infectious zombism has spread to the point where folks like you and me have become a definite minority whose position is perilous in the extreme; indeed, we seem to be on the point of being wiped out altogether, leaving the living dead only themselves to nibble on. Perhaps the final film, if there ever is one, will be on that very theme, and we'll have NICE living dead people versus BAD living dead people. But I hope not.

Mr. Romero is his own producer, or rather Mr. Romero's producer works for Mr. Romero, so we can't really feel sorry for him if one or another of his films turns out not to be what the banker asked for. In this instance, I don't think that *Day* is a particularly disastrous failure—or much of a triumph. I suspect it'll perform along the same lines financially. But one never knows.

There is a cute subplot in *Day* in-

volving a very mad scientist (played red-haired with a nice, loony, spittily feel by Richard Liberty) who has rather lost the point of being the head of a government project designed to wipe out the zombies, having become preoccupied instead with trying to make them be good little dead boys and girls. He even tries to make friends, particularly with one walking corpse (played with a very appropriate sort of pin-headed sincere nervousness by Howard Sherman) who he's nicknamed "Bub" after his father, a much more successful doctor than the one portrayed by Liberty, and nowhere near as mad.

But though I did enjoy the doings of Liberty and his dead pal, I really didn't think their shenanigans were strong enough, or sufficiently developed enough, to carry the rest of the film. And the film does need carrying. *Night* was OK since it spent its time making the point that we can be suddenly endangered by dead people who don't stay dead anymore; they can get up and try to eat us. *Dawn* had the very cute notion of putting the action into a shopping mall, which really brought zombism home. Who among us has not, after wandering for a period in one of those places, staring at the endless displays, gawking at the pretty lights, riding up and down on the hypnotic escalators, found him or herself slowly but very surely turning into the living dead, and who among us has not been horrified by the vulnerability which that implies?

OK. But *Day*, outside of the mad doctor, doesn't develop anything Romero hasn't covered thoroughly before. It's exactly the same plot: trapped survivors squabble about how to handle their horrible situation, things get gooier and gooier and, though some characters manage to cut and run, it looks as if humanity may lose in the end. There is a basic twist, but it doesn't make for a new movie and is, I suspect, a not altogether conscious change in Romero's philosophical outlook. The good guys previously were those who dealt toughly but competently with the ghastly threat, and the bad guys were those who chickened out or behaved somehow inappropriately. In *Day*, the competent toughies are now viewed as military meannies, and the ineffective dreamers are seen as superior humans.



Dripping feet from *Cocoon*.

One thing that was supposed to make the movie new is its supposed locale, a government underground shelter. But the shelter doesn't convince, neither in its look and feel, nor in the way it's set up, nor in the way it functions. It never succeeded for me in being anything more than a pretend place, and not particularly well pretended at that.

There are, of course, the old reliable Romero specialties, the gross-out make-ups and the cannibalistic orgies, but here, too, there is nothing really new and, worse, considering that we are now operating with a real budget and are now supposed to be experienced pros, the excuses of *Night* no longer function: we are no longer a little gaggle of talented amateurs, and for professionals there are far too many silly sloppinesses: too many people still screaming after their heads have been pulled off their windpipes, too many make-believe disembowelments showing seams. This may sound silly, but it isn't. The people who track down Romero movies are picky and expect their gory slaughters to be properly done. So, whatever else you manage to pull off, let's tear those victims apart a little more carefully, fellahs, in your doubtlessly inevitable sequel.

Getting better, we have *Cocoon*, produced cannily by David (Jaws) Brown and the Zanucks, directed by Ron (Splash) Howard, and starring

such oldies but goodies as Don Ameche, Hume Cronyn, Jessica Tandy, Maureen Stapleton, Jack Gilford, Gwen Verdon, and Wilford Brimley, who play the most loveable bunch of old farts ever assembled in one retirement community.

The thing gets going very nicely. Ameche, Cronyn, and Brimley discover, to their unmitigated joy, that the pool of an old Florida mansion has been turned into the fountain of youth. (It's been done by a group of extraterrestrials in an attempt to rescue some crewmates left behind millennia ago during an Atlantean exploration.) Their rejuvenated doings are amusing enough to watch, except that the script assumes that folks don't grow up, merely older, so their hijinks are really just a return to the glories of high school.

The aliens are also loveable, of course, and highly derivative of Spielbergian fantasies, but neatly done. Tyrone Power, Jr., who is one of the creatures, certainly puts you in mind of his old man, and Tahnee Welch, who is another, sure does take after her mother, Raquel, and besides looking like old movie stars, they glow in the dark and fly around like faeries and practice sex via astral projection. Brian Dennehy is excellent as their leader, who appears to be a large, concerned-looking human in disguise.

The problem with *Cocoon* is identical to *Close Encounter's* weak spot: the premise, never so much as whispered aloud, is that human life is a dreary, second-rate affair that only takes on real significance and promise when it comes in contact with the far more meaningful existences of vastly superior aliens. Put any kind of dressing on that stance you wish, deck it out how you will—it is a dismal and depressing notion.

I have saved the best, *Back to the Future*, for last. Here, finally, is the sort of light, frothy, summer entertainment all those other people were trying for.

The story is a totally ridiculous but very amusing saga about time travel which concerns yet another loveable young fellow, but this one is saved entirely from the cuties by the performance of Michael J. Fox, an actor small only in stature. Mr. Fox's young fellow is intelligent enough to be wary, but he is also basically fond



Christopher Lloyd in *Back to the Future*.

enough of his fellow humans to be forgiving.

The movie is directed by Robert Zemeckis, written by him and Bob Gale, and I hope they (and their producers, of course) make lots of money with *Back to the Future*, which, unlike *Cocoon*, has a very positive subliminal message—and a lot more laughs—since it makes merciless fun of stupidity, cowardliness, terrorists, and intellectual paradoxes, among other things, and enjoys itself immensely while doing it.

Not to spoil the plot, but ... the young man has a lot in common with

many young men—parents he wishes would get it together, a girl he would like to make love to that instant, a little trouble getting his artistic message across to the world. But his life has its unique aspects, too: a Delorean auto with some really remarkable options and a mad scientist friend, played with marvelous gusto by Christopher Lloyd, whose skull, jaw, eye rollings, and neck structure often put one affectionately in mind of dear old Boris Karloff.

I could go on, but I think you'll enjoy *Back to the Future* all the more, the more you are surprised. See it. ■

BIG SMILE

(continued from page 79)

"Don't," she told him. "Don't say that."

"Oh, why not?" he said, nuzzling the back of her neck. "It's easier to smile than to frown; don't you know that? It takes a lot fewer muscles and it's ... it's just so easy!" She stiffened; he didn't release her. "It's a fact, love, that smiling makes you feel better, gives you energy, makes you want to conquer worlds and fight dragons."

"I don't want to fight a dragon," she said peevishly, twisting out of his grasp, pushing him away from the sink. "I just want to get on with it."

Footsteps in the hall.

The twins stood in the doorway.

"Mommy?" Pamela said. "Mommy, are you okay?"

"Fine, darling," she said without turning around. A pause that Ron frowned at, hoping she wouldn't be so heartless as to tell them to leave her too. Not now, not at Christmas. Pat lowered her head. "I just broke a glass, that's all. Why don't you and Sharon go upstairs and get changed? Dinner will be ready in a few minutes."

"Okay," the girl said, whirled in blond pigtails, and Ron listened with closed eyes as the twins ran up to their rooms.

"Wonderful," he said. "They're wonderful."

"They're spoiled," she snapped. "Spoiled rotten, and they always were, thanks to you. And I've got to be crazy to go on like this, acting like nothing's happened, everything's still the same." He stepped away as she rinsed the last of the dishes and began to set the table, silverware banging, a plate almost breaking. "And all you do is stand around and tell me to smile. Like that's going to solve all my problems."

"But it's attitude, Pat," he explained for what had to be the one millionth time. "A smile is only an outward display of an inner attitude."

The policeman, siniling; the old women; the young man.

She took the ham out of the oven, the vegetables off the stove. A bottle of wine from the cupboard, and she turned to face him with a begging smile.

"Go away," she said.

There was only one place at the table.

He smiled back and shook his head. "I know you love me and don't mean it," he said, reaching for a hug. "Tell me you're sorry, and all will be forgiven."

"You bastard," she said, almost spitting like a cat. "Jesus, you are still a simple-minded bastard, you know that? When the hell are you going to learn that I'm not sorry now, I wasn't sorry then, and I don't give a damn if they lock me away for the rest of my life, I won't ever be sorry! Ever, Ron! Are you listening?"

"Now, Pat, please don't start," he said, backing away from her anger.

"Don't start? Hell, I'm not ever going to stop! Not until you, all of you, get the hell out of my life!"

He laughed. "Darling, please, don't you see you're—"

And she screamed. A crimson swirling rage that swarmed into the room and slammed him against the wall; a black and roiling fear that drew a knife into her right hand and plunged it into his chest. Pulled it out. Plunged it again while she wept and she screamed. He staggered away from the blows and fell into the hallway, knees buckling before he reached the end of the staircase. The knife in his back. In his neck. In his arm.

She screamed.

He moaned, and felt his eyes closing, felt the darkness out there, felt the cold, felt the end. Struggling to prevent it, telling himself it wasn't time, that his time hadn't come, that Pat didn't know what she was doing.

Felt the blade.

Heard the screaming.

Something bubbled in his throat, and he choked, coughed, spat up warm liquid that dribbled off his chin.

Felt the blade.

Saw the darkness.

Heard her screaming, "Go away!"

And he did, until pressure on his arms made his eyelids jump, made his eyes open slowly, made him swallow bile and blood.

Pamela was at his right hand, Sharon at his left, their faces pale with concern, their lips trembling and eyes filling until they saw how all right he was.

When he had swallowed and taken a deep breath to calm himself and rid his muscles of the shakes, he nodded, and they helped him to his feet, giggling softly and wondering aloud how Mommy would do it next time.

How, and to which one.

He stood in the kitchen doorway, and Pat turned around.

"Oh Christ," she said, and dropped into a chair. "Oh Christ, go away."

But he could tell she was weakening; he could see the love in her eyes.

"Go on, Daddy," Pamela urged softly.

"Yes, Daddy, tell her," Sharon said with a quick laugh.

He looked down at them and winked, his two wonderful daughters.

"Hey, Pat," he said then, walking across the room to embrace her, "why don't you give us a smile, huh? Give us all a big smile and tell us you care." ■

The Vampire Lestat

(continued from page 27)

thought vaguely, yet I went on.

"Don't give it a thought, my dear Renaud," I said. "Stage blood, nothing but an illusion. It was all an illusion. A new kind of theatrical. Drama of the grotesque, yes, the grotesque."

But again came that distraction, something I was sensing in the melee around me, people shuffling and pushing to get close but not too close, Nicolas stunned and staring.

"Go on with your plays," I was saying, almost unable to concentrate on my own words, "your acrobats, your tragedies, your more civilized theatricals, if you like."

I pulled the bank notes out of my pocket and put them in his unsteady hand. I spilled gold coins onto the pavement. The actors darted forward fearfully to gather them up. I scanned the crowd around for the source of this strange distraction, *what was it*, not Nicolas in the door of the deserted theater, watching me with a broken soul.

No, something else both familiar and unfamiliar, having to do with the dark.

"Hire the finest mummors"—I was half babbling—"the best musicians, the great scene painters." More bank notes. My voice was getting loud again, the vampire voice, I could see the grimaces again and the hands going up, but they were afraid to let me see them cover their ears. "There is no limit, NO LIMIT, to what you can do here!"

I broke away, dragging my roquelaure with me, the sword clanking awkwardly because it was not buckled right. Something of the dark.

And I knew when I hurried into the first alleyway and started to run what it was that I had heard, what had distracted me, it had been *the presence*, undeniably, in the crowd!

I knew it for one simple reason: I was running now in the back streets faster than a mortal can run. And *the presence* was keeping time with me and *the presence* was more than one!

I came to a halt when I knew it for certain.

I was only a mile from the boulevard and the crooked alley around me narrow and black as any in which I had ever been. And I heard *them* before they seemed, quite purposefully and abruptly, to silence themselves.

I was too anxious and miserable to play with them! I was too dazed. I shouted the old question, "Who are you, speak to me!" The glass panes rattled in the nearby windows. Mortals stirred in their little chambers. There was no cemetery here. "Answer me, you pack of cowards. Speak if you have a voice, or once and for all get away from me!"

And then I knew, though how I knew, I can't tell you, that they could hear me and they could answer me, if they chose. And I knew that what I had always heard was the irrepressible evidence of their proximity and their intensity, which they couldn't disguise. But their thoughts they could

cloak and they had. I mean, they had intellect, and they had words.

I let out a long, low breath.

I was stung by their silence, but I was stung a thousand times more by what had just happened, and as I'd done so many times in the past I turned my back on them.

They followed me. This time they followed, and no matter how swiftly I moved, they came on.

And I did not lose that strange toneless shimmer of them until I reached the place de Grève and went into the Cathedral of Notre Dame.

I spent the remainder of the night in the cathedral, huddled in a shadowy place by the right wall. I hungered for the blood I'd lost, and each time a mortal drew near I felt a strong pulling and tingling where the wounds had been.

But I waited.

And when a young beggar woman with a little child approached, I knew the moment had come. She saw the dried blood, and became frantic to get me to the nearby hospital, the *Hôtel-Dieu*. Her face was thin with hunger, but she tried to lift me herself with her little arms.

I looked into her eyes until I saw them glaze over. I felt the heat of her breasts swelling beneath her rags. Her soft, succulent body tumbled against me, giving itself to me, as I nestled her in all the bloodstained brocade and lace. I kissed her, feeding on her heat as I pushed the dirty cloth away from her throat, and I bent for the drink so skillfully that the sleepy child never saw it. Then I opened with careful trembling fingers the child's ragged shirt. This was mine, too, this little neck.

There weren't any words for the rapture. Before I'd had all the ecstasy that rape could give. But these victims had been taken in the perfect semblance of love. The very blood seemed warmer with their innocence, richer with their goodness.

I looked at them afterwards, as they slept together in death. They had found no sanctuary in the cathedral on this night.

And I knew my vision of the garden of savage beauty had been a true vision. There was meaning in the world, yes, and laws, and inevitability, but they had only to do with the aesthetic. And in this Savage Garden, these innocent ones belonged in the vampire's arms. A thousand other things can be said about the world, but only aesthetic principles can be verified and these things alone remain the same.

I was now ready to go home. And as I went out in the early morning, I knew that the last barrier between my appetite and the world had been dissolved.

No one was safe from me now, no matter how innocent. And that included my dear friends at Renaud's and it included my beloved Nick. ■

A horror writer is horrified. By the state of Maine. Breakfast cereals. Academics. And the blank page.

Writing horror is a scary business. And it's getting scarier. Mainly because it's getting harder and harder to scare people.

Even the famous horror writer's handbook, *Neat and Scary Stuff to Write*, is hard pressed to come up with new ideas. In fact, for the first time in modern memory, *Neat and Scary Stuff to Write* is late. And let me tell you, that's really scary!

For those of you who don't know, *Neat and Scary Stuff to Write* (NASSTW or "Nastoo" to us insiders) is the fantasy-horror writer's sourcebook published annually by the Miskatonic University Press in Arkham, Massachusetts. It is analogous to, but long predates, the mysterious post office box in Schenectady used by science fiction writers. NASSTW is even more mysterious. As soon as a subscriber uses one of the story ideas listed in its pages, that particular idea disappears from all other existing copies.

All copies are sent out first-class mail on January 2nd of each year. Consider that fact for a moment and you have the answer to the oft asked question as to why so many famous horror writers hail from New England. Now you know why Peter Straub moved from Britain to Connecticut. And why Stephen King, who could buy most of the Lesser Antilles, still resides in Maine.

They get their copies first!

Yes! Living in the same postal zone as Arkham, Mass., gives them first dibs on the best ideas in the book. That's why they're the best-selling horror writers in the world.

Many feel Stephen King has taken unfair advantage of his geographical position—has been downright piggy, in fact—with his early access to NASSTW. But word has come down from Miskatonic U. that he has been severely reprimanded. And you don't ignore a reprimand from those eldritch quarters. (If I remember correctly, the last writer to ignore a reprimand was a fellow named Ambrose Bierce.)

But all that aside, the fact remains that the 1985 edition of *Neat and Scary Stuff to Write* is late. And I can't help but think that it's because

even the folks at ol' MU are strapped for new topics to scare people.

A little perspective, if you will: Consider how easy it used to be to scare people. Fifty years ago women fainted in the theaters at the sight of Boris Karloff as that patchwork quilt of human flesh in *Frankenstein*. My mother tells me that back in the '30s when she was a teenager, she heard about this new creepy movie called *Dracula*, so she got the Stoker novel out of the library and read it. The book so terrified her that she slept with a rosary around her neck for months and refused to see the movie when it came to town.

It's pretty damn hard to scare people who grow up starting off every morning with a bowl of Booberry while watching a videotape of *Friday the 13th*.

Traditional things-that-go-bump-in-the-night like werewolves and vampires and man-made monsters were potent horrors half a century ago.

Things have changed. We live in a different world now. We've seen extermination camps and atom bombs. For the last thirty years we've had the power to turn our planet into a sterile dirtbomb lofting through space.

Of course, we haven't done so yet and hopefully won't, but in the face of that sort of stuff—which is very scary but not at all neat—vampires and *Frankenstein* creatures are nothing. In fact, they've become so trivialized that they're now used to hawk cereal to little kids.

Frankenberry!
County Chocula!
Booberry!
Oy!

Fifty—hell, fifteen—years ago, that kind of ad campaign would have been unthinkable. Which wasn't fair. I mean, I would have loved any one of

those cereals when I was a kid. Other kids might have been put off, but I wasn't like other kids. While they were building Revell plastic battleships and bombers, I was building an Aurora plastic *Frankenstein* monster with the glow-in-the-dark face. I know I'd've thought Frankenberry was neat. Of course, my folks never would've let me have any. Just like they wouldn't let me read EC Comics. But I found ways to buy and read *Weird Science* and *Tales from the Crypt*, so I imagine I'd have found a way to get a daily fix of Count Chocula.

But what I'm getting at is that it's pretty damn hard to scare people who grow up starting off every morning with a bowl of Booberry while watching a videotape of *Friday the 13th* for the ninety-second time!

I mean, what's next? And what will their kids eat for breakfast?

Can you see it? A guy in a hockey mask with a bloody machete across his shoulder and a box of cereal in his hand: 'New vitamin-fortified JASONBERRY! Delicious little puffs of wheat in the shapes of eight different sharp-edged farm tools, with just the right touch of sugary red, Jasonberry-flavored coating, on each delicious little point! JASONBERRY! Get it ... before he gets you!'

Spare me.

Another trend potentially inimical to the future of horror fiction is the recent academic interest shown toward the genre. This could be the true kiss of death.

What if horror fiction becomes, like, I mean, totally respectable? If there comes a day when you can actually be seen reading it in public? When you no longer have to tear the cover off a skeazy porno novel and wrap it around your most recent horror purchase so you can read it on the bus or the subway without feeling like some sort of deviant?

This is not a groundless fear. Look at science fiction—it was almost ruined by respectability! The same fate could befall horror fiction. Horror writers are particularly vulnerable to the seductive call of academic acceptance.

Imagine: The college professor



Lou Costello—an early F. Paul Wilson reader—is not impressed.

seeks, finds, and corners the horror writer at the bar in the hotel where the fantasy convention is being held. He tells him how impressed he was with the crucial scene in his last novel, *The Necrodancer*, in which the reanimated corpse of the nameless wino plucks out the eyes of the rich industrialist and serves them in martinis to the cocktail party guests. What a blistering political statement! What a monumentally scathing commentary on the social and economic dichotomies intrinsic to western culture! And would you care to lecture my class at Columbia on modern novelists?

Now, the horror writer is not a terribly political person. In fact, he assumes Carter is still president. He was up until four in the morning and is already on his third Jack Daniels before breakfast; he dimly remembers that he wrote that scene because he thought it was a neat-o gross-out, and vaguely hoped it might catch the eye (sorry!) of a producer-director of low budget splatter films.

But does he say so? Does he defile such praise—*diminish* himself—by telling the truth?

Hell, no!

"Yeah, those damn dichotomies,"

he says. "Damn those dichotomies! Always did tick me off!"

Don't be too hard on the fellow. He's been accused for years of (God forbid) entertaining his readers. Now he's being praised for relevance, social significance, and maybe even (oh, lord) *literature*!

What's so wrong with that? you say.

Plenty!

Think about it. The next time he sits down at the trusty old word processor he might not be thinking about writing something that will please and engender more praise from fellows like the one in the bar, or something that might coax some kind words from Christopher Lehmann-Haupt of the *New York Times*. And if he succeeds, others will follow. Pretty soon there will be a whole crew of horror authors writing to please the academicians and the *Times* and everybody but the reader.

And before you know it, they won't be writing horror anymore.

Which may be the best thing for them. Because we're all pretty well stuck without our annual copies of NASSTW. And don't think the top names in horror fiction don't know it.

The smart ones have been planning ahead for the day when they won't be able to scare people anymore. As I'm sure you all know, in lieu of royalties for his last two books, Stephen King accepted controlling interest in the Ralston-Purina company.

It's true! He's already got two new products in line for distribution: Cujo Kibble—in the shape of little bats and Volkswagens; and Church Chow, for those cat lovers who want their pet to keep coming back ... and back ... and back.

The rest of us aren't so fortunate. We keep sitting at our desks before our lifeless word processors as we stare out of our windows and wait for the postman—not hoping he has a check from the publisher, but praying he'll bring the new *Neat and Scary Stuff to Write*. For without that, there'll be no checks from any publishers.

If any writers out there have received their 1985 copy of NASSTW, please contact me immediately care of TZ.

Until then, I'll have to make do writing westerns and (ugh) romances. And articles like this one.

Help.

Take a laptop on your next trip—
or around the corner to a café.

My Kaypro II (64K) weighs 25 pounds.

The NEC Electronics PC-8410A (64/96K) weighs 4.7 pounds.

When I bought my Kaypro II, a mere year and a half ago, it was considered "portable." I have moved it from room to room frequently, and taken it to Vermont on an ill-starred vacation. But I've never succeeded in stuffing it into my briefcase.

The Tandy TRS-80 Model 200 (24.72K) tips the scales at 4.5 pounds; the Epson PX-8 (64K) is a mere 4 pounds. Battery-powered, these "laptops" can sit on a beach in Aruba and produce timeless prose, with the proper guidance. Many have built-in modems, so you can communicate with your office or home computer via telephone.

Of course, there are many machines, many features, and, therefore, a neurotic's dream of decisions to make. And unmake.

To simplify the process, ask yourself these questions:

How "portable" must my machine be?

How much memory do I really need? (Keep in mind that these computers have been designed as accessories, capable of transferring information into your desktop.)

What am I willing to pay?

Is the screen readable?

Forget all the fine points at first. You can reject many of the computers on the market immediately once you analyze your own needs.

Portability: The computer industry has used the term "laptop" for a wide variety of machines, some, like the Apple IIC, as heavy as 13 pounds. The Data General One is 9.1 pounds, the Hewlett-Packard HP-110 is 9 pounds, and the very attractive Kaypro 200 is 10 pounds. The advantages of these machines are many. They can generally display more text, crunch more numbers, and offer disc drives with up to 720K. However, if you want to carry one around often, you also need your notebooks, spreadsheets, two shirts and a pair of socks, the pounds can mount up.

Memory: As already noted, the smaller machines have less RAM. You can add on cassettes, or even disc drives, however. Obviously, the nature of your work is crucial here. If you are doing word processing, and you don't mind filling up a few cassettes and downloading into your desktop later on, you can stick with a light machine. However, if your calculations call for an unusual number of bytes, beware. The little machines might not be able to digest them.

Cost: Of the bigger machines, on-



Morrow Pivot II

ly the Kaypro 200 and the Morrow Pivot currently retail for less than \$2000. The Data General One and Hewlett-Packard HP-110 have come down to around \$2300. All of the smaller ones retail for less than \$1000.

Readability: The great flaw in laptops to date is the Liquid Crystal Display screen. Manufacturers readily admit they are difficult to read. And they are. However, they are improving. The Morrow Pivot (128/640K), for instance, has a back-lit screen. Spend time working on any machine before you buy it. See if your eyes can take the strain.

Clearly, there are two tiers of laptops, despite the way the computer industry uses the term. You can save yourself a lot of time and confusion if you first choose between them.

Then you can begin to wallow in bauds and Basic and bases.

—MB

COMING UP in Twilight Zone SPECIAL STEPHEN KING ISSUE!

Featuring:

King Fiction: 'The Fifth Quarter,' a John Swithen tale.

King Interview: A probing talk with the horror-master by Doug Winter.

King Collecting: How to buy rare King—without getting burned.

Plus: F. Paul Wilson's savage 'The Last One Mo Once Golden Oldies Festival,' Jon Cohen's wry 'Ruth's Pool.'

Darrell Schweitzer's 'Richard Middleton: Beauty, Sadness, and Terror.'

Film: 'F/X' directed by Robert Mandel. A special effects man is approached by the government to stage a fake assassination. Advisor and real effects man on 'F/X,' the legendary John ('Star Wars') Steers, talks to TZ.